Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics of the Classic Period

Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics of the Classic Period

Dorie Reents-Budet

with contributions by
Joseph W. Ball, Ronald L. Bishop
Virginia M. Fields
and Barbara MacLeod

Photographs by Justin Kerr

Forewords by
Michael P. Mezzatesta and
Linda Schele

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To my parents,

Jane and A. Curtis Reeves,

in honor of their

fiftieth wedding anniversary

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Foreword

by Michael P. Mezzatesta, Director, Duke University Museum of Art

It is a rare moment and a special privilege in the life of a museum when it can offer to the public a landmark exhibition. *Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics of the Classic Period* represents such a moment. Here, for the first time in a major traveling show, one of the greatest, though least appreciated, painting traditions is presented. Painted on terracotta vases and plates during the apogee of Maya civilization (550–850 A.D.), these works of art represent not only one of the high points of pre-Columbian art but also one of the most distinguished schools of world painting. The extraordinary artistic quality and the rich and complex historical, mythical and cosmological allusions depicted on these vessels represent a cultural achievement paralleled only by Greek vase painting.

Some ninety-six objects have been assembled from public and private collections in the United States as well as from public collections in Guatemala and Belize. Indeed, we are fortunate to have the Buenavista Vase, a designated "National Treasure" of Belize, as the keystone of this exhibition. However, *Painting the Maya Universe* is not just about the gathering of splendid masterpieces. Rather, it offers a compelling analysis of these works, reconstructing their context using the latest scholarly developments in archaeology, iconology, scientific chemical analysis and epigraphy. Indeed, among the greatest achievements of the past twenty years in Maya studies has been the gradual deciphering of Maya glyphs. One of the many revelations of this project has been the discovery of the artists' signatures! We now know the identities and social status of the artists who painted many vessels; where they were painted; what the scenes represent; what the vessels contained (chocolate, in many cases); and how they often were used in official ceremonies or as diplomatic gifts at the highest levels of social interaction. We have opened wide a window into a lost civilization, recapturing the complex artistic, social, political, religious and economic relationships that governed the production and use of these magnificent objects. Many separate, specialized scholarly disciplines have been brought together to present this broad picture of the life of the ancient Maya, one that helps us to understand as never before the rich network of ideas contained on these painted vessels. It is for these reasons that *Painting the Maya Universe* represents a milestone in Maya scholarship.

One person more than any other must be credited for the realization of this project: Dr. Dorie Reents-Budet, Associate Curator of pre-Columbian Art at Duke University Museum of Art. From the day I first hired her in 1988 to care for our 3,300-item pre-Columbian collection, she has been planning this show. Indeed, it was DUMA's holdings of painted Maya vessels—some 700 in all—that provided the catalyst. (Duke University Museum of Art is the single largest lender to the exhibition.) But for Dorie, *Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics of the Classic Period* represents not simply an exhibition but a lifetime's work. It would be impossible to calculate the hours she has labored over the years. She has been the driving intellectual force behind the innovative multidisciplinary approach to *Painting the Maya Universe*. Despite limited resources, she has surmounted all obstacles, overcome setbacks and persevered in the goal of sharing her deep knowledge of Maya culture with a new audience. Although one of the most distinquished scholars in her field, she avoids the language of the specialist to speak to a general public about her love of Maya art. In this regard, she is especially gifted. Her evangelical spirit in promulgating the wonders of Maya civilization has won, and will win, many new converts and offers opportunities to increase our understanding and respect for a remarkable culture too little known.

Words seem insufficient to acknowledge her extraordinary achievement. She has earned our deepest admiration and respect as a scholar, educator, colleague and friend.

Special thanks also must be extended to the other contributors. Virginia Fields, Associate Curator of pre-Columbian art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, joined the effort at an early stage. Her assistance in launching and sustaining the exhibition is greatly appreciated. She has produced the excellent catalog section of the book. Ron Bishop of the Smithsonian Institution's Conservation Analytical Laboratory, Museum Support Center, is Senior Research Archaeologist. He has been our guiding light in the field of neutron activation. As head of the Smithsonian's Painted Maya Vase Project, his expertise has helped to wed science and art history with startling results. No less remarkable have been the contributions of Barbara MacLeod. Her work on the Maya glyphs has led to many important discoveries. The results of Joseph W. Ball's analysis of Classic Maya pottery is an important addition to this book. It has been an honor to work with this team of distinguished scholars. We also have been aided by a panel of the world's leading experts on Maya culture, who traveled to Duke in 1989 and Los Angeles in 1991 to help formulate the exhibition's parameters. We are deeply grateful to the members of the Advisory Committee, named in the front matter, for their enthusiastic support.

The lenders to the exhibition deserve special recognition. Public collections and private collectors in the United States, the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Popol Vuh Museum in Guatemala City, and the Department of Archaeology under the aegis of the Ministry of Tourism and the Environment in Belize, agreed to send key works from their collections. These objects are especially fragile and their transport difficult. The lenders' participation confirms our belief that the exhibition's intellectual rewards were worth the risk.

In the current economic climate, securing funding for *Painting the Maya Universe* was a challenge. As always, The Mary Duke Biddle Foundation has been exceedingly generous. It is no exaggeration to say that without the Foundation's support this show could not have been realized. We also are grateful to The National Endowment for the Humanities for a $50,000 planning grant that significantly advanced the project. Special thanks are extended to The Friends of the Art Museum; Mr. and Mrs. Curtis Reents; Frank Hanscom III; The Mobil Foundation, Inc., Matching Gift Program; The Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies; Mr. Bernard Selz; and The Duke-UNC Program in Latin American Studies for their support.

Production of the catalog has been made possible by a major grant from the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies. This support has enabled DUMA and Duke University Press to produce a book whose elaborate photographic apparatus alone makes it a major contribution to the field. We all have been inspired by the Foundation's generosity and especially by its deep interest in Maya scholarship and art. Additional funding for the catalog has been provided by The Mary Duke Biddle Foundation; The Friends of the Art Museum; Frank E. Hanscom III; and the Mobil Foundation, Inc., Matching Gift Program.

Alan Shestack, Director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Lewis Sharp, Director of the Denver Art Museum; and Michael Shapiro, Director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art have been

extremely understanding and patient as we worked through the many problems facing the exhibition. John K. McDonald, Associate Director of the Yale University Art Gallery was instrumental in arranging for the show to come to New Haven. We are very appreciative to all of them for their support. We are also grateful to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, with whose cooperation the exhibition has been organized.

The video, featuring the Buenavista Vase, was created by William Howze of Houston, Texas. He produced a marvelous work in record time, a feat that is not surprising, as Bill is one of the greats in his field. Funds for the video were provided by The Mary Duke Biddle Foundation.

Painting the Maya Universe represents DUMA's fifth copublication with Duke Press. It is hard to imagine a more affable working relationship. Particular thanks to Larry Malley, Director, and Ken Wissoker, Editor, for their unflagging support. As "point man" for Duke Press, Ken always understood and supported our goals. If there is a more sensitive and caring editor in America, that person remains unknown to me.

We celebrate, too, the designers of this magnificent book: Molly Renda and Nancy Sears. Not content to rest on the laurels garnered from the many awards for their beautiful DUMA catalog, *Jackson Pollock: "Psychoanalytic" Drawings*, they quickly seized the opportunity to design *Painting the Maya Universe*. Perhaps the highest praise that I can offer them is to reveal that they not only designed the book but read every page, viewed the objects and understood that we wanted to instill in the reader the same sense of awe that a visitor to the gallery experiences. The results of their labor of love are self-evident. I consider myself blessed to have been able to work with Nancy and Molly.

Finally, there is the DUMA staff. It is a constant source of amazement to me how such a small group can accomplish so much. This project, the largest and most complex we have undertaken, has been realized by their continuous dedication. Lilian Antonovics, our Welsh wonder-woman, ably assisted with grants; Jessie Petcoff, Registrar, co-coordinated the incredibly complicated shipping arrangements with magical ease. She makes it all seem simple but I know it is not. Andy Park, Director of Public Relations, disseminated the news to the media as only a red-bearded Irishman can. Kathy Kay, Curatorial Assistant, provided invaluable support to Dr. Reents-Budet during 1992–93. We were very lucky to have her with us. Harvey Craig displayed his new skills in the fabrication of special cases and vitrines while Henry Frans sensitively installed the objects. Together, they are a formidable team. As always, Rita Barden kept everyone sane even as she handled a torrent of correspondence. I am extremely proud of DUMA's staff. It has been an honor working with them.

Whenever we, regardless of our racial or ethnic background, learn about other peoples and times, our own lives are enriched. It is our hope that this exhibition will engender the same love of learning and enthusiasm for the world of the Maya with which it was created.

Foreword

[illegible] Professor of Fine Arts, The University of Texas at Austin

Nineteen seventy-three was a seminal year for Maya studies. A conference at Palenque, Mexico, called "The First Mesa Redonda," ignited the process of deciphering the Maya writing system and recovering the Maya view of their ancient history. In this same year, Michael Coe's seminal book on Classic Maya pottery and related art objects *Maya Scribe and His World* accelerated the study of ancient Maya religion and ritual practice. Before Coe's formative study, Maya ceramics had been the province solely of archaeologists who used them to establish chronologies within particular sites and relative chronologies and connections between sites. A decade earlier, Maya archaeologist J. Eric S. Thompson had declared that the writing on these pots was nonsense imitations of real writing; thus few researchers were looking at pottery painting as a source of information on the history of Maya religion, culture, aesthetics or politics. *Maya Scribe and His World* changed all that and opened up new avenues of research and understanding that are still unfolding. Mike Coe not only showed us that the pictures were meaningful, but he brought the texts alive. He demonstrated that Thompson had been wrong; there were recognizable and widely spread patterns in the order of glyphs on the pottery. His suggestions as to the meaning of these patterns proved to be incorrect, but his recognition of them led to their decipherment by such epigraphers as David Stuart, Nikolai Grube, Stephen Houston and Barbara MacLeod. That was the way it was in much of what he wrote in *Maya Scribe*; he was often wrong in the detail, but the overwhelming rightness of his overall insight changed the way we understand and use ceramics.

From the texts we have learned how the Maya thought about the objects they created, what they called these objects, their uses, their owners, and perhaps most spectacular of all, the names of several dozen artists. Ceramic images have also peopled the Maya world and animated their representations of the otherworld. We first contemplated life in the palaces and the nature of Maya ritual by looking at ceramic images. The many beings depicted on the pottery with such amazing skill and imagination have been shown by Stephen Houston, David Stuart, Nikolai Grube and Werner Nahm to be *nawals* (way in Mayan), special animal and spirit companions that share their souls as human beings. Imagery on pottery has illustrated the great genesis myth of the ancient Maya known among the K'iche' Maya of highland Guatemala as the Popol Vuh. It has shown the Maya had artists as magnificent as any in the Old World and that these artists took pride in themselves. They signed their names to their work and gave us Michelangelos and Leonardos of the New World.

Another great contribution from the study of Maya ceramics was pioneered by Clemency Coggins three years after the publication of *Maya Scribe and His World*. In her dissertation on the painting and drawing styles of Tikal, Coggins used ceramics as a source of information about Tikal's dynastic history, social structure, interrelationships with other sites and many other kinds of cultural domains. Unfortunately this extraordinary effort has only been published in microfilm, but its influence on the field of Maya studies has also been seminal. Like Coe, Coggins was wrong in many of the details, but she also was amazingly prophetic in others. Her work gave ceramics a different kind of voice that was amplified and enriched by archaeological context.

The great discoveries that grew from these two works led to an unfortunate schism in the field. Archaeologists who had used ceramics to generate chronologies for their sites found themselves uncomfortable with pots that spoke. They often dismissed the work of epigraphers and iconographers as "tainted" because it used information from objects that had been looted. They also felt

gated the study of the imagery and writing to the netherworld of the "unscientific." Epigraphers and iconographers, feeling themselves embattled, have built their own defenses within the environment of rancorous debate. Too often the two sides have not spoken to each other in ways that elucidate Maya cultural history.

After twenty years of debate and research *Painting the Maya Universe* brings these many fields of enquiry together in a marriage that enriches all of them. Various chapters address Maya pots as aesthetic objects and as carriers of critical cultural information about function, ownership, artistry, politics, cultural history, religion, ritual and a hundred other things. The written, painted and carved records of meaning are examined at many different levels from the individual object to general themes of meaning and function, and a world of ethnohistorical and ethnological information sets the ceramics and the act of making them into a larger cultural context.

But *Painting the Maya Universe* also shows how the "science" of neutron activation, microscopic analysis and other similar approaches yield facts about origins, trade, and workshops that complement the cultural information. This book also addresses the irreparable loss of information that occurs when objects are ripped from their archaeological context to become parts of public and private collections. To this I might add there is as great a loss when archaeologists excavate Maya sites and fail to publish their results accompanied by drawings and photographs of the scientifically excavated objects that are in forms useful to epigraphers and iconographers.

Painting the Maya Universe calls for collaboration among all researchers so that results and methodologies of their various approaches enrich our understanding of Maya culture history. The book is a magnificent and much needed assessment of how far we have come in the last twenty years, and it points the way toward the kind of research and collaboration we need for the future.

Acknowledgments

Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics of the Classic Period is not the accomplishment of a single individual but rather is the collective accomplishment of the many colleagues and friends who have participated in the research presented in this book and who have contributed to the realization of the exhibition. Foremost are those who have contributed to, facilitated and supported the Maya Polychrome Ceramics Project (MPCP), upon whose research this book and exhibition are based. One could not wish for a better friend, colleague, researcher and humorist than Dr. Ronald L. Bishop, director of the MPCP and senior research scientist, Conservation Analytical Laboratory, Smithsonian Institution. Particular recognition and gratitude is extended to Dr. Lambertus van Zelst, director of the Conservation Analytical Laboratory, for his vision and unfailing support of the MPCP as an integral part of the Conservation Analytical Laboratory, especially given the budgetary constraints under which the Smithsonian Institution must operate these days. The MPCP was initiated through the cooperation of the Research Laboratory of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Department of Chemistry at Brookhaven National Laboratory. Work at the latter institution was carried out under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Energy, with funding for the creation of the unique analytical data base provided by Mr. Landon T. Clay of Boston. From the project's inception, the continuous support of Dr. Garman Harbottle, Dr. Edward V. Sayre and Dr. Lambertus van Zelst has been indispensable. My participation in the project originally was made possible through the support of C. C. (Todd) Aikins of Wichita, Kansas. I salute his belief in the lasting value of the MPCP, which prompted him to shift his financial resources from collecting Maya art to funding research on it. This book owes much to Todd's farsightedness and generosity.

Access to museums' collections in the Americas and Europe has contributed significantly to the project's scope and has enhanced the pictorial and hieroglyphic corpus from which we distinguish Classic Maya painting styles. Of crucial importance has been the sampling of the archaeological collections at the Peabody Museum, Harvard University. In particular, I wish to acknowledge the cooperation of then-director C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky and Bowditch Professor Gordon R. Willey, who made these collections available for study. Their willingness to advance justified research is commensurate within their pursuit of objectively based scholarship. During the ensuing years, the cooperation of directors and curators of the many museums in the United States, Belize, Canada, England, Germany, Guatemala and Mexico—who opened their displays and storerooms for research—has been critical to the project. In alphabetical order, these include the American Museum of Natural History; Art Institute of Chicago; Bayly Museum of Art, University of Virginia; the British Museum; Dallas Museum of Art; Denver Art Museum; Denver Natural History Museum; Duke University Museum of Art; Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Art Museum, Princeton University; Mint Museum, Charlotte, North Carolina; Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología de Guatemala; Museo Popol Vuh (Guatemala); Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada; The Saint Louis Art Museum; The University Museum, University of Pennsylvania; and the Yale Art Gallery, Yale University.

The Maya Polychrome Ceramics Project and *Painting the Maya Universe* have been immeasurably enhanced by the assistance and cooperation of institutions and individuals in Central America. In Belize, the Department of Archaeology has been

an unfailing source of research support through access to the national archaeological collections continuously granted by the commissioners of archaeology during the past ten years; Mr. Harriot Topsey, Mr. John Morris and Mr. Allan Moore. My gratitude also is extended to all staff members of the Department of Archaeology for their assistance during our research visits, especially Ms. Theresa Batty, George Thompson and Paul Francisco. The department does an outstanding job with few resources other than these individuals' dedication. I wish to thank the commissioners of archaeology of Belize and the Honorable Glen Godfrey, past-Minister of Tourism and the Environment, for agreeing to lend objects to *Painting the Maya Universe* from the national archaeological collection of Belize. I am beholden to the Honorable Henry Young, the new Minister of Tourism and the Environment, for his honoring and upholding of the loan agreement of his predecessor. I also would like to gratefully acknowledge Dr. Victor González, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism and the Environment for his continuing support of archaeology and the international loans of objects from Belize's national archaeological collections. Ms. Winnell Branche, director of the Department of Museums, and her staff have been most generous with their time and knowledge, explaining the National Museum's education programs that, in conjunction with those of the Department of Archaeology, are helping to preserve the archaeological sites and cultural treasures of Belize. And finally, I would like to thank the Honorable James V. Hyde, past-Ambassador to the United States, for his graciousness and support of the all-important loan of the Buenavista Vase to Duke University Museum of Art and the exhibition.

In Guatemala, I especially would like to thank Lica. Dora Guerra de Gonzáles, Director of the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología, and Sr. Rodolfo Yaquián, objects restorer at the Museo Nacional. At the Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquín, I am indebted to Dr. Fernando Sánchez, Director; Lic. Rolando Roberto Rubio, Chief Curator; and Sofía Paredes Maury, assistant curator. Access to the archaeological collections of the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (IDAEH) de Guatemala has been gained through the assistance of Profesora Zoila Rodríquez Girón (Universidad de San Carlos and IDAEH) and Ms. Elizabeth Lemus Toledo (IDAEH). The project also gratefully acknowledges the collaborative research support of Dr. Juan Pedro LaPorte, archaeologist (Universidad de San Carlos) and Lic. René Ugarte of the Proyecto Nacional Tikal. The loans of objects from Guatemala would not have come about without the support of Lica. Eunice Lima, Ministra de Cultural y Deportes and Lic. Estuardo Meneses Coronado, Viceministro de Cultura y Deportes who granted our request for the loan these national treasures of Guatemala. The invaluable support and assistance of Arq. Erick Cortéz, Director of IDAEH, and Lic. Eric Ponciano, Director of Monumentos Prehispánicos (IDAEH) have ensured that the important Guatemalan loans became a reality. Dr. Juan Antonio Valdéz, Director of Patrimonio Nacional y Cultural de Guatemala, provided crucial advice and much-needed support with the loan request process. I will always be indebted to Mr. Rogel Chi, chief administrator of the Parque Nacional de Tikal, for his support and cooperation in lending one of the most important pottery vessels from the Museo Morley at Tikal. I am deeply grateful to Lica. Ligia Toledo de Conde for her invaluable advice and assistance with the requisite paperwork and her unrelenting support of *Painting the Maya Universe*. Our projects' goals have been advanced through the continued cooperation and support of Guatemalan citizens Lic. Enrique Fernández Bianchi, Arq. Federico Fahsen Ortega, Lic. Juan U. Maegli of Tecum Corporation, Dr. Guillermo Mata Amado, and Lic. José María Palacio Porta, all of Guatemala City. The assistance and words of wisdom of Sandra Villagrán de Brady and James Brady, of Guatemala City, were instrumental in my understanding the loan request process and seeing it through to its fruition. And finally, I would like to thank Mr. Ismael H. Caniz (of Caniz International Corporation) for his advice and assistance with the packing and shipping of the pieces from Guatemala. The extreme carefulness of Don Ismael and his assistants was directly responsible for the objects' safe passage.

In Mexico, the Maya Polychrome Ceramics Project has received the assistance of many colleagues who have given permission and participated in the sampling of the country's archaeological collections, especially Dr. Noberto González and Lic. Alfredo Barrera Rúbio, directors of the Centro Regional de Arqueología, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) in Merida, Yucatan; Lica. Lorena Mirambell Silva, president of the Consejo del Arqueología (INAH) and Dr. Angel Garía Cook, director of INAH (both in Mexico, D.F.); and archaeologists Dr. Fernando Robles, Lica. Sylviane Boucher and Lic. Ramón Carrasco. I also would like to thank Dr. Pedro Schmidt, director of the Museo Cantón (Merida); Lica. Miriam Kaiser, director of the governmental commission overseeing international exhibitions; and Lic. Mario Vásquez, Coordinador Nacional de Museos y Exposiciones, for their assistance with our loan requests. Despite their efforts, we were unable

[illegible] I also extend my appreciation to [illegible] Maya Polychrome Ceramics Project through [illegible] excavated materials and [illegible] and collegial criticism [illegible] The project would never have [illegible] these colleagues' collaboration, support and free exchange of ideas.

[illegible] *Chinese Royal Ceramics* [illegible] owes its existence to the support and collaboration of all those who have [illegible] Maya Polychrome Ceramics Project. [illegible] the perseverence, perspective and [illegible] of Dr. Virginia M. Fields, co-curator of the exhibition, have made this project possible. I [illegible] to thank the exhibition's Advisory Committee whose advice and ideas have enhanced the quality and intellectual scope of the exhibition and book. My special thanks to Elizabeth Benson, Elizabeth Boone, Sylviane Boucher, Michael Coe, Gillett Griffin, Juan Pedro LaPorte, Guillermo Mata Amado, Linda Schele, Harriot Topsey and Lambertus van Zelst. I also am indebted to the anonymous reviewers of the book's manuscript for their excellent suggestions and thought-provoking comments.

The personnel of the Duke University Museum of Art (DUMA) are directly responsible for the actualization of the exhibition. No exhibition of this scope would ever be possible without the continuing support, assistance and encouragement of the museum's director, Dr. Michael Mezzatesta. His intervention at the appropriate times saw me through the turbulent waters of the complicated world of museums. To all the staff of DUMA, I extend my appreciation and respect for their collaboration to hard work, especially to Mr. Harvey [illegible] and Mr. Henry Frans for their carpentry skills and packing expertise, and to Ms. Kathy Kay for her important curatorial assistance. I also am grateful to Ms. Jessie Petcoff, DUMA registrar, who has ensured the safety of these art treasures of the ancient Maya, and Dr. Jill Meredith, curator of all art at DUMA except the pre-Columbian collection, for their assistance and encouragement, especially during the difficult moments. The support of Duke University and its past president Dr. Keith Brodie and current president Dr. Nannerl O. Keohane has been seminal in bringing to fruition the exhibition and especially the scholarly research upon which the exhibit is based. The book's designers Nancy Sears and Molly Renda collaborated closely with me to ensure that their outstanding design contributed to the many goals of this publication; I will always be grateful for their enthusiasm and attention to minute details. The editors at Duke University Press, Jean Brady and Ken Wissoker, also had an important hand in the successful completion of this complicated publication.

I am beholden to Dr. John Spencer, director of DUMA during the mid-1980s, who hired me in the summer of 1984 to make drawings of all the hieroglyphic texts on the Maya pottery in the museum's collection. The funds for this research project were provided by Mr. Hamilton C. Forman who recognized the importance of these yet-to-be deciphered texts. Through the years, these drawings have been a primary hieroglyphic resource for epigraphic research summarized in this book. Mention of the pre-Columbian art collection of the Duke University Museum of Art cannot be made without also giving all due accolades to Mr. Paul Clifford, whose vision, generosity and dedication created this collection.

Special recognition is extended to the institutions and anonymous private individuals who granted access to their collections and to thank them for their generous loans of objects to *Royal Ceramics of the Maya Universe*. In alphabetical order, these include: the Art Institute of Chicago, curator Dr. Richard Townsend, curatorial assistants Ms. Jackie Johnson and Ms. Ann King; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, curators Ms. Leanne Falino and Ms. Desiree Caldwell, registrar Ms. Linda Thomas and assistant registrars Ms. Pat Loike, Ms. Kim Pashko and Ms. Bonnie Porter; Dallas Museum of Art (past curator Dr. Carolyn Tate), curatorial assistant Ms. Cathy Wendrove, registrar Ms. Kim Bush; The Denver Art Museum, curator Dr. Gordon McEwan, curatorial assistants Ms. Inga Calvin and Mr. Brian Lang, registrar Mr. Tony Wright; Department of Archaeology and the Government of Belize, commissioners of archaeology Mr. Allan Moore, Mr. John Morris and Mr. Harriot Topsey, ministers of Tourism and the Environment the Honorable Mr. Glen Courtney and Mr. Henry Young; Dunbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C., Dr. Elizabeth H. Boone, director of Pre-Columbian Studies, curatorial assistant Dr. Candace Callaway; The Firestone Library, Princeton University, curator Dr. Alfred Bush; Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Mr. [illegible]; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, curator Dr. Virginia M. Fields, department assistant Ms. [illegible], registrar Ms. Penny Montgomery, director of conservation Dr. Pieter Meerts; The Mint Museum, Charlotte, North Carolina, curator Dr. Charles Mountain, registrar Martha Johnson; Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología, Guatemala, director Lic. [illegible]; Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquín, Guatemala, director Dr. [illegible]

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Doric Reents-Budet
Durham, North Carolina

Preface

This book looks with renewed eyes at pre-Columbian Maya elite painted pottery, presenting current ideas, proposing different interpretations of old data and hopefully spawning more questions about this great painting tradition and the culture that created it. This certainly is not the final word on Classic Maya pictorial ceramics. Rather it is intended as a new introduction to the technical, aesthetic and intellectual achievements of the artists who created this unique pictorial pottery and to the many roles played by these vessels during the first millennium A.D. This book strives to open an adjoining door in the cultural arena to bring these works into the sphere of the great paintings of the world and to inspire further investigations and healthy debates concerning the many issues raised herein. It is my hope that, beyond the book's focus on the pre-Columbian Maya, the study of these paintings created in a distant time and place by a very different people may help us live better lives today by allowing us to escape from our present time and place, our present sensibilities and narrowness of vision.

The pottery objects featured in this book have been chosen because they provide a broad representation of the myriad Classic Period elite ceramic painting styles, focusing on those vessels with pictorial and hieroglyphic imagery. The reader should keep in mind that these are only a sampling of the painting styles in the rich corpus of Classic Period polychrome pottery. Another reason we have chosen these from among the thousands of painted pottery vessels is that most of these vessels have been chemically sampled by the Maya Polychrome Ceramics Project, Conservation Analytical Laboratory, Smithsonian Institution. This allows us to study pottery objects in a number of different ways, and through the project's interdisciplinary approach we are able to demonstrate that important cultural and historical information can be gleaned from objects that lack archaeological contextual data.

That is *not* to say, however, that this project condones the ongoing looting of archaeological sites from whose destruction vessels such as these have come. Truly it is time for the world to take account of the decimation of our collective cultural and historical heritage, and we hope that Chapter 7 contributes to the education of the public concerning this critical issue. Only those nonprovenienced objects that came into the U.S. prior to the U.S. ratification in 1983 of the UNESCO agreement on cultural property are included in the exhibition because we will not glorify through publication or public display the current unethical and immoral looting by which objects continue to enter the international art market.

This book strives to demonstrate that those nonprovenienced (looted) objects already out of the ground and in circulation are important sources of information for art historical, cultural and aesthetic pursuits by specialists or by people with a general interest in the art and intellectual contributions of non-Western cultures. The exhibition strives to demonstrate that large quantities of high-quality art with notable intellectual interest already are in circulation among collectors and collections worldwide; it is not necessary to support the ongoing looting in order to create today a collection of this art. Yet we strongly believe that punishing pre-1983 objects by ignoring them as sources of historical information, thereby denying the public the opportunity to enjoy and learn from these pieces, does not stop looting or preserve archaeological sites. In fact, our experience demonstrates the exact opposite.

Other criteria by which vessels were chosen for *Painting the Maya Universe* include the relative lack of modern repainting found on individual pieces. Vessels whose imagery has been extensively repainted to increase their market value

have been excluded for two reasons. First, the purpose of this project is to feature these works as great paintings, and, as we do not repaint a Monet, so too should we respect the œuvre of the Classic Maya master painters. Second, extensive repainting of these vessels renders them useless as objects for study by aestheticians, art historians, epigraphers, archaeologists and any interested individual. Because this book is intended to be a lasting resource on Classic Maya pottery, we publish only those vessels whose painted imagery represents Classic Maya artistry.

To write Mayan words, we have chosen the conventional orthography in use by Maya epigraphers for a number of years. We recognize the political importance of the Guatemalan Academy's new orthography and in other contexts we use it. However, we believe that the older orthography is more suitable to the audience for this book. We use the newly deciphered Mayan names for those Classic Period rulers whose glyphic translations are widely accepted by Maya epigraphers. To write the Mayan decipherments and English transcriptions of the hieroglyphic texts painted on the pottery, we use boldface for the syllabic decipherments and logographic readings of the glyphs and italics for their readings in Mayan languages. An asterisk identifies reconstructed ancient Mayan words. The reader is reminded that Maya hieroglyphic decipherment is a dynamic field and, at this time, all readings are subject to new discoveries. The decipherments and transcriptions presented in this book represent the state of the field as of June 1993. All drawings in Chapter 4 are by Barbara MacLeod unless otherwise noted.

Because of the lack of nomenclature for most Classic Maya painted vessels, we use the vessels archival numbers from the Maya Polychrome Ceramics Project (MPCP), Conservation Analytical Laboratory (CAL), Smithsonian Institution. These begin with the letters "MS" (for "Maya Survey," the short name for the project). Interested individuals can use these numbers to gain access to all chemical and photographic data in the project's files at CAL. When a vessel has yet to be sampled, we use its number in the Kerr Photographic Archive (e.g., K2796, catalog 11). In a few cases, vessels are known by a proper name, such as the Buenavista Vase. We continue this tradition but also list these vases' MS numbers (e.g., The Buenavista Vase, MS1416, catalog 95).

1. Classic Maya Pottery Painting

1.1

Tikal Temple I, the funerary monument of the Late Classic ruler *Hasaw Ka'an K'awil*.

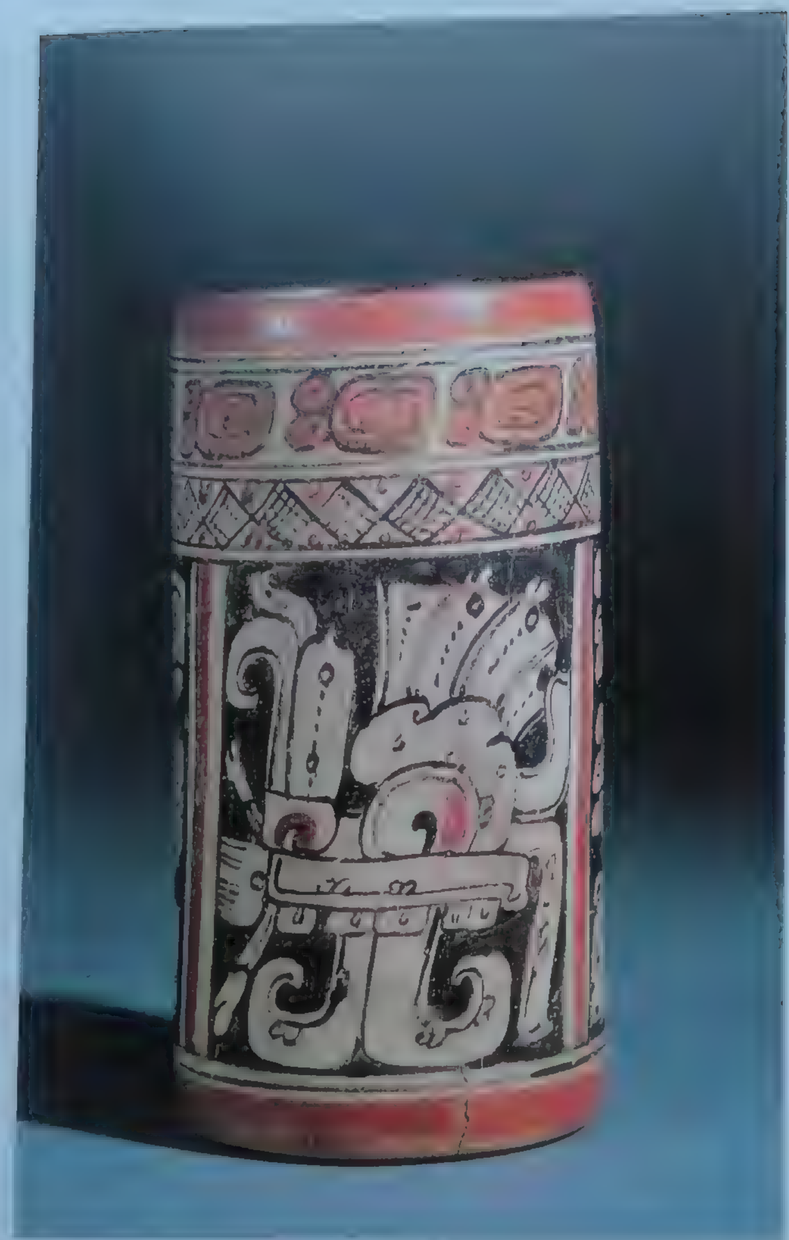
Among the Classic Maya (A.D. 250–850), painting was the primary expressive aesthetic medium. Most of this legacy has been lost because paintings were created on surfaces that have not survived the major destructive forces of the environment and, to a small degree, the coming of Europeans. Fresco painting on the exterior and interior walls of Maya buildings was very common, but the renowned murals of Bonampak are the only large-scale survivors of this pan-Maya tradition.[1] Painting on cloth and paper (that is, on textiles and in the pre-Columbian screenfold books, called *codices*) was central to Classic Maya artistic ventures, yet cloth and paper also have not survived because of both natural and social environmental factors. As is common throughout the world, the pre-Columbian Maya books were destroyed during the political and cultural upheavals of the Classic and post–Classic Periods as well as in the sixteenth century by the Spanish friars.[2] The primary surviving example of Classic Maya painting is pictorial polychrome pottery; it survived because of its durability and the protection afforded by its being buried in tombs and in the ubiquitous refuse deposits common to all Maya sites. These paintings on ceramic allow us a glimpse of this rich artistic tradition as well as of the highly codified elite stratum of Maya society and the historical and mythological events that sustained them.

Pictorial pottery was created as part of the increasingly complex social, political and economic developments that characterize the Classic Period. During the Early Classic Period (A.D. 250–550), towns were growing into cities and new cities were founded as the population coalesced due to social and political intensification and economic developments such as intensive agriculture techniques and the resultant nonsubsistence production strategies that developed using the newly available labor. The larger sites extended their political and economic influence over ever-increasing distances to include new resident populations, creating extensive and dynamic political hierarchies. Lineage-based power structures underlay these developments, with the subordinate seats of power in the surrounding towns being held by members of the ruling family from the dominant site or by local elites allied to the dominant site's rulers. By A.D. 500, Classic Maya civilization was urban and hierarchical. Having created complex systems on every level from common subsistence to interwoven economies, from local governance to international politics, from the family social unit to intertwined hereditary dynasties, this civilization rivaled Renaissance Europe and Imperial China.[3]

Within each of the Classic Period polities, the dominant site was the focal point for social, political and economic pursuits. These events were accompanied by myriad public and private rituals sponsored by the ruling elite, which provided the context for the perpetuation and diffusion of their power and the ideologies upon which power was based. These rituals required all the trappings of prestige, assisting in the proclamation and reinforcement of the ruler's authority. Impressive monumental architectural stages for these theatrical state rituals were created, combining spacious plazas surrounded by imposing buildings, both administrative and residential. Some of the more ostentatious buildings, such as Tikal's massive funerary pyramids, were commissioned as statements of personal power (Figure 1.1). Monumental sculpture adorned the architecture, the imagery underscoring the same elite proclamations and ideologies. The rituals enacted upon these stages required specially made objects and elaborate costuming for the participants (cf. Figure 3.23), decorations for the interiors and exteriors of the buildings and distinctive painted service ware for the ritual feasts. This finely painted polychrome pottery not only was used as high-status serving vessels but also was employed as social currency in the realm of ritual regal gifts. A ruler would bestow an important art work on a favored individual as part of the process of securing and/or/ proclaiming his support. The new owner could display the recognized gift and use the vessel as a symbol of his own status and political connections. Parallel to this sociopolitical sphere in which the pictorial pottery functioned, and in some cases separate from it, is the pottery's third major function as funerary ware. Polychrome vessels frequently are found in the tombs of the elite, and sometimes not-so-elite, members of Maya society. Their imagery correspondingly deals with cosmological religious themes, especially postdeath beliefs, including the symbolic tale of the defeat of death by the Hero Twins recounted in the epic *Popol Vuh*.

In contrast to vessels painted with cosmological and funerary imagery are those embellished with scenes taking place inside Maya buildings and whose depicted human participants are named in the accompanying hieroglyphic texts. Some of these same individuals appear on the carved stone monuments found at the most important Maya sites; these public monuments record historical and ideological facts about the site and its rulers. The scenes painted on the more private pottery, too, are immutable pictorial and hieroglyphic records of specific moments in the pageant of Maya history, although these rituals' details rarely are found on the public stone monuments. Therefore, the pictorial pottery provides unique details of Classic Maya historical rituals.

The Classic Period saw constant political fluctuations during which different sites became centers of power, extending their influence over the surrounding towns and villages. The rituals that underscored the power of the ruling lineages and their representatives throughout the polities were important components of the establishment and maintenance of these units. The finely painted elite pottery developed in tandem with the growth of the complex ritual traditions in which it played a part. The pottery's painted images and hieroglyphic texts conveyed history and ideology as well as prestige. Yet in order for a painted elite vessel to be an effective symbol of prestige in a patchwork of individual rulers and competing polities, the vessels needed to be recognized as both finely painted artworks and the artistry of a particular place or person. Here comes into play not only Classic Maya aesthetics but also the development of unique painting styles, the establishment of elite ateliers (workshops) and royal patronage, and the recognition of the works of the exceptional artist. As has occurred among other cultures, when art becomes a player in the arena of political power and social prestige,

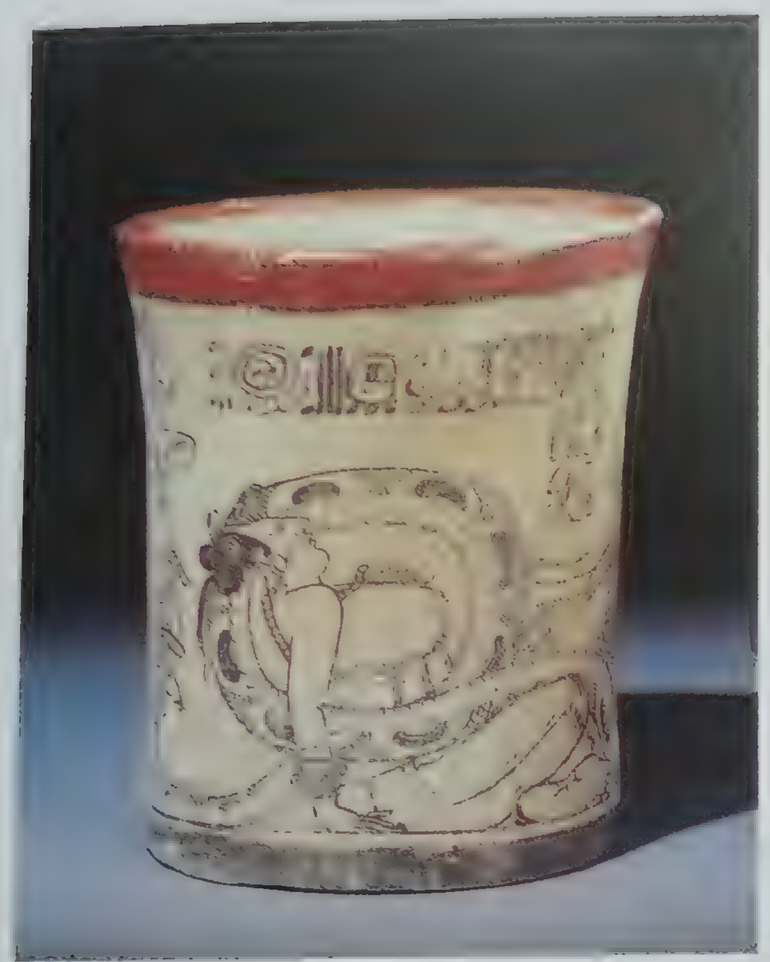


it must take on unique visual characteristics, represent high quality work and be personalized. Among the Classic Maya, this was manifested in the sixth-century-A.D. explosion of new painting styles associated with specific places (cities and polities) and the appearance of the names of the patrons, artists and possibly the workshops painted on the vessels. It was not by chance that among this socially and politically active pottery we find some of the very few signed works of art from the pre-Columbian world.

As a particular polity's fortunes rose and fell during the Classic Period, there were increases and decreases in the site's production of the material trappings of power, and the site's artistic styles also changed through time. Artistic dynamism and its correlation with a site's sociopolitical and economic position are readily documented in the carved stelae (freestanding stone monuments) from many sites. For example, when Tikal (in Guatemala) was experiencing downturns in its power during the sixth century A.D.—which paved the way for Caracol (in Belize) to become a dominant regional site—the carving of stelae ceased at Tikal and took on new

1.2 MS1271

The artist divides the vase's pictorial surface into an obverse and a reverse, duplicating the same image on each side. *Also see catalog 29*



1.3 MS1722

The pictorial composition on this Codex-style vase is a continuous scene requiring the viewer to rotate the vase to see the complete composition. *Also see catalog 30.*

artistic vigor at Caracol. Once Tikal regained a position of power, stelae were once again erected in the site's main plazas. Not surprisingly, their representational style also changed. The same kind of dynamism certainly existed in the elite ceramics and is one of the primary factors behind the appearance of so many different elite pottery painting styles during the few hundred years of the Late Classic Period (A.D. 550–850).[4]

Although some archaeologists believe that Classic Period craft specialization in the Maya lowlands was not well developed, the elite painted pottery argues against this interpretation.[5] The technical difficulties overcome by the pottery artists represent scores of decades of experimentation and the necessity of long apprenticeships in order to learn the perquisites of low-fire slip painted pottery (slip paint is a mixture of finely ground pigment, clay and water) and successful mastery of this difficult painting medium. The technical consistency among the painting styles and their sheer numbers strongly imply well-developed specialization. The best painters were among the most highly educated people in the society, gaining expertise in Maya history, science, ideology and cosmology, as well as being imbued with the practical and mystical aspects of the writing system. The learning of these intricate knowledge sets does not take place in an informal nor an unstructured environment, instead requiring specialized, long-term education. The application of this knowledge to the creation of paintings on ceramic also must occur in a highly structured and specialized artistic environment requiring years of instruction and practice. Therefore, at least in terms of the elite painted pottery, these vessels are the material manifestations of well-developed intellectual and artistic specialization.[6]

Formal Features of Classic Maya Pictorial Pottery

In any artistic tradition, those attributes that allow for the identification of painting styles embody all the formal features of art, including line quality, slip color palettes, vessel shape and the repertoire of representational formats and pictorial compositional approaches taken by the painters. The technological features of ceramic production also comprise important elements of style and include surface finish, variation in paint opacity and transparency, vessel thickness, paste composition and firing characteristics. In addition to these visual attributes, linguistic and pictorial narrative choices also are formal elements that identify individual styles, including the hieroglyphic variations of the Primary Standard Sequence and the idiosyncratic renditions of the main iconographic programs that characterize the corpus of Late Classic pottery imagery.

Compositionally, Maya painters approached the cylindrical vase in two ways. In most cases, they divided the pot's pictorial surface into two halves; that is, an obverse and a reverse, usually painting the same imagery on each face and dividing the two faces by short vertical hieroglyphic texts (cf. MS1271; Figure 1.2). In other cases, the artist painted a continuous scene wrapping around the vessel (cf. MS1722; Figure 1.3), requiring a person to hold and rotate the vase in order to see the entire pictorial program. This implies a personalized and intimate association with the object. The wraparound scenes represent both religious and historical events, and many provide extensive pictorial and hieroglyphic details concerning the depicted event. In order to create this kind of pictorial record with all the details of person, place and activity, a relatively large amount of pictorial space is required. A cylinder vase provides sufficient pictorial area if the artist wraps the imagery around its full circumference. A wraparound composition represents a major artistic achievement because the painter could only work on and see a small portion of the composition at any one time.

1.4 MS0653

After this vase was fired, it was covered with a thin coat of stucco and then painted, recalling the *al fresco* mural technique used to decorate Classic Period buildings

1.5 MS1521

To create imagery, Maya painters rely primarily on a dark contour line over a light background color. Note the dripping quality of the body paint. *Also see catalog 32.*

Maya pottery painters rely heavily on *line* as the primary expressive feature, and on some pottery styles such as the Codex-style, line defines all pictorial imagery (cf. MS1722; Figure 1.3). Line width variation is integral to the aesthetics of Maya pottery, underscoring its origin as a painting rather than a graphic tradition that probably had its beginnings in fresco painting on architecture. The painterly similarities are especially evident when comparing the Bonampak wall murals to pottery vessels covered with a thin coat of stucco and then painted (Figure 1.4). The Classic Maya may have adapted this architectural decorative technique to fired ceramics to create a more durable and portable pictorial record.

That Maya art in general, and pottery in particular, originates in painting is underscored by the fact that in all Mayan languages there is no linguistic or semantic differentiation among the words for painting, drawing and writing; all are referred to by the verb stem *ts'ib*. The distinction among these graphic techniques is an Occidental feature stemming from the two primary Western implements, the stylus and the brush, with which marks on paper are made as well as from the Western conceptual distinction between inking characters that represent language versus brushing pigment to create a pictorial image. For the Classic Maya, however, the making of images—whether writing, drawing or painting—was born from the brush. Technically and conceptually, all were the same creative activity.

Maya painters relied primarily on a dark contour line over a lighter background (cf. MS1521; Figure 1.5). Double contour lines sometimes were employed, created by leaving unpainted a small area between contour line and the solid color field filling a shape. For example, on MS1389 (Figure 1.6), the artist painted the contour of the seated figure in black line and the body area red. The red paint does not completely fill the body shape, which is especially noticeable on the torso and upper arms, where an unpainted white area appears between the black contour and the red fill-in paint. This reserved area creates a double contour with a white line paralleling the black one. In those cases where the background is painted red or black, the artists first painted the contour lines of the imagery and then filled in the background and obscured the original outlines (cf. MS1271 and MS1262; figures 1.2 and 1.7). Here the darker solid color field of the background provides the primary definition for the imagery, and the outline defines secondary elements within the defined forms.

In Maya art, the imagery existed primarily within two-dimensional pictorial space, and, when present, the third dimension was extremely shallow. The imagery was found in the foreground and was tied to a single *ground line* (base line), the background having little visual depth (cf. MS1521; Figure 1.5). Implied three-dimensionality was achieved primarily in two ways, the most common of which was to overlap images (cf. MS1722; Figure 1.3). To render a scene with many participants

1.6 MS1389

Double contour lines highlight the central figure: a black contour outlines the body and red paint fills the body area. The reserved space between the black and red colors creates the double contour. *Also see catalog 16*

1.7 MS1262

The artist first painted the imagery and then filled in the red background, obscuring the original outlines. The variations in value in the red field imbue the background with visual depth, implying a limitless three-dimensional void. *Also see catalog 31.*

and the requisite three-dimensional space, Maya painters occasionally used multiple ground lines, spacing the figures vertically to render cubic space (cf. MS0065; Figure 1.8). A second way in which the painters implied three-dimensional space was to manipulate the degrees of opacity and transparency of the slip paints. The artist who painted MS1262 (Figure 1.7) exploited the variation in values of the red ground color on this Early Classic lidded dish to imbue the background with greater visual depth. Here the painted imagery is purely two dimensional whereas the background takes on depth of field, the image floating in a sea of red.[8]

Maya pottery painting represents its own unique development of polychromy in low-fire ceramics. The artists created a highly varied palette of both primary and secondary colors in slip paint and utilized color to its fullest expressive force. Color was employed to differentiate components of the imagery and also functioned symbolically, for example to identify precious materials such as jadeite and quetzal feathers, which were important visual markers of status. This simultaneous naturalistic and symbolic use of color is seen on MS1389 and MS1262 (figures 1.6 and 1.7), where the now gray earflares and the headdress feathers most likely were originally a green color that has faded through time.

1.8 MS0065

The Maya painter employs multiple ground lines and organizes the figures vertically to imply three-dimensional space. Overlap plays a minor role in this spatial system.

Maya artists also manipulated paint for its variable opacity, relying heavily on this inherent characteristic of water-based slip paints to achieve different visual effects. By so doing, the artists were able to complement the primacy of single-value line with variations in pigment saturation, lending visual excitement and a wider palette to what otherwise could have become rather monotonous color fields. For example, on MS1525 (Figure 1.9), a saturated red paint was used on the rim and basal bands and to outline the main imagery, while dilutions and mixtures of the red paint create the orange and probably pink hues surrounding the glyphs and coloring the main icon. This painterly quality is readily apparent on MS1521 (Figure 1.5), on which the artist used red paint to highlight the imagery as well as the medium itself. A red slip colors the seated figure's body, and the dripping pigment on the figure's thighs highlights the liquid quality of the slip paint itself. By drawing attention to the slip as both imagery coloration and as paint, the artist demonstrates a sophisticated recognition of the medium not usually associated with pre-Columbian art.

One of the remarkable characteristics of Classic Maya painted pottery is the use of writing as more than simply a way to communicate ideas. As in the Islamic tradition, Maya artists employed calligraphy as a prime design feature and as an integral part of the total composition. For example, on MS1521 (Figure 1.5) the strong sense of design created by the curvilinear black outlines of the hieroglyphs, each of which is separated into an even visual rhythm by vertical red lines, reflects the same strong patterning seen in the painting of the figures. To highlight this visual similarity between text and image, the artist chose not to isolate the text into a separate horizontal band across the vase's upper register. Instead, the painter used a diluted wash of the red slip to

lightly color the glyphs' interior spaces, which differentiates them from the figural image but not enough to separate them into two visual categories.

The hieroglyphic texts also were used as compositional devices, placed specifically to help define the internal tensions, balances and divisions within the pictorial field. For example, on MS1722 (Figure 1.3) the two short vertical texts parallel the small vertical Maya deity called *God K*, together creating a beginning and ending point for the wraparound composition. The horizontal inverted L-shaped text not only balances the visual weight of the main imagery by filling the void above the seated female figure, but it also focuses attention on the point of contact between the female enwrapped in a serpent and the male figure emerging from

1.9 MS1525

Maya painters create different colors by varying the amount of pigment in solution. For example, different saturations of red iron oxide create the red, orange and yellow hues on this vase. (Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina. Gift of Mr. Andrew W. Lanyi.) *Also see catalog 33*

the saurian's maw. On other vases (cf. MS1126; Figure 1.10), the hieroglyphic texts function formally as a framing device for the pictorial field and double as the roof line and pillars of the palace in which the figures sit.

The semantics of the Primary Standard Sequence (PSS), as recorded in its verbal phrase, underscore its integral part of these painted vessels. The PSS is the main hieroglyphic text painted just below the rim on the vessels' exterior (cf. figures 1.9 and 1.10). The PSS begins with a dedicatory statement referring to the act of painting the vase, which in turn blesses it (or "makes it proper" for) its ritual use. Therefore, the lack of a PSS text would render the vessel incomplete and leads to the conclusion that this text was a necessary part of the vessel's overall composition.

Although the PSS is central to the aesthetics and meanings of Classic Maya pictorial pottery, as a written narrative it exists apart from the pictorial imagery. Interestingly, the PSS does not comment on the pictorial imagery. Instead it dedicates the artistic act of painting, which in turn makes proper the completed vessel, then goes on to record the pot's original contents, names the patron or owner for whom it was made and sometimes concludes with the name (or "signature") of the artist. This informational domain is quite separate from the pictorial images, which run the gamut from religious ideology, cosmology and representations of supernaturals to depictions of both the public and

1.10 MS1126 *(overleaf)*

The Hero Twins and Itzamná sit inside a palace that is implied by the hieroglyphic texts. The Primary Standard Sequence around the rim creates the palace's upper facade, and the short vertical PSS texts function as the supporting pillars. *Also see catalog 88.*

1.11 MS0165

This vase is painted to resemble a woven basket. Because Classic Maya basketry has not survived, these renditions in ceramic are important replications of this now-lost art form. *Also see catalog 38.*

private rituals that comprised elite Maya life and history. The PSS and the pictorial imagery exist within an autonomous narrative structure wherein each has its own emphasis.[9] This is unlike the majority of Maya art such as the carved stone monuments that are characterized by interactive narrative, a strategy in which text and image function together to communicate overlapping messages.[10] If the pictorial images are discussed glyphically on the pottery, these commentaries are found in short texts placed within the pictorial scenes or, in a few instances, the historical commentary replaces the PSS altogether (for example, see many of the *Ik'*-style vases discussed in Chapter 5).

The shape repertoire for Late Classic pictorial pottery seems to have been dictated initially by the pots' function as cylindrically shaped drinking vases, as bowls to contain semiliquid foods and as wide and relatively flat plates for holding solid foods. During the course of the Classic Period, when the pictorial imagery became increasingly exuberant, vessel shapes remained very simple. Double-angled walls, highly outflaring or incurving walls, handles, spouts and even the ubiquitous Early Classic basal flanges on plates are absent or are very rare. Although exceptions can be found, most pictorial pottery comprises a restricted repertoire of simple vessel shapes (cylinders, bowls and plates). The underlying reason may not be one of food service function but rather may reflect the artists' desire for as much pictorial space as possible.[11] Further, the simpler the shape, the easier it is to adapt a flat pictorial composition to the vessel. The desire for pictorial surface area, then, had a constricting effect on the repertoire of vessel shapes for the elite pottery, with imagery superceding form.[12]

The primacy of imagery and the shaping of the vessel to create as much pictorial area as possible is noticeable particularly on those vessels painted with geometric motifs (figures 1.11-1.13, 1.15-1.17). Cylinder vases have parallel or simple incurving or outcurving walls, and plates generally have out-flaring walls that create a broad surface area on the plate's interior on which to paint the imagery (Figure 1.17). The geometric motifs were borrowed from other media, including woven basketry (cf. MS0165; Figure 1.11) and textiles (cf. MS1268; Figure 1.12), whose representations on the painted pottery provide a hint of the artistry in these now-lost media.[13] Maya artists also replicated in paint the pelt of the jaguar, who symbolized the power of Maya rulers. Their pelts covered thrones, were worn by rulers and even were used as curtains in the palaces of the elite.

[illegible] makes reference to one of the Maya supernat[illegible] whose abdomen usually is marked with the [illegible] (Figure 1.12). This combination of natural and supernatural aspect is an appropriate motif for a ritual [illegible] used by the ruling Maya elite.

[illegible] (Figures 1.15 and 1.16) are two [illegible] of the same geometric imagery and com[illegible] format, one painted by an artist living in the [illegible] (Guatemalan highlands, Figure 1.15) and the [illegible] in Petén lowlands [illegible] black and white horizontal [illegible] space, the highland [illegible] using a chevron motif and the lowland painter [illegible] and into a double checkerboard design. The main pattern on both is the *k'in*, or sun, motif, which resembles a four-petaled flower. The highland artist embedded small linear versions of the motif inside a larger one outlined in thicker black lines, together creating a band of large X-like *k'in* designs around the body of the vase. The interstices (or background) are filled with smaller *k'in* motifs painted in red. The lowland artist, on the other hand, divided the main pictorial field into a horizontal band of rectangles, filling each with a *k'in* sign alternating with another symbolic motif.

1.12

[illegible] The background [illegible] and [illegible] an overall [illegible]

1.13 MS1370

This small vase is decorated with a naturalist's jaguar pelt design that includes a *k'in*, or sun, sign. *Also see catalog 39*

1.14

The pictorial scene on this Codex-style vase includes a supernatural jaguar whose abdomen is marked with a *k'in*, or sun, sign.

1.15 MS0804

Pottery from the Chamá and Alta Verapaz regions of southern Guatemala is characterized by bold patterns, in particular black-and-white chevron bands. This vase is unusual for its repeating design of *k'in*, or sun, motifs. *Also see catalog 34.*

1.16 MS0673

The low sides of this dish provide space for only a single line of *k'in* signs, alternating with what may be abstract representations of a floral motif. The checkerboard pattern replaces the more usual hieroglyphic text. *Also see catalog 35.*

1.18 MSBV70

The nuances of color and value on the bodies of the two figures on this vase give visual interest and depth to the color field rather than attempt to represent the three-dimensionality of the human figure through the rendering of shadows caused by light raking across a volumetric surface. *Also see catalog 44.*

The plate form provides a pictorial surface whose imagery can be viewed in its entirety without rotating the object. Interestingly, the images on plates do not differ widely from those painted on the cylindrically shaped vessels. For example, MS0086 (Figure 1.17) is decorated with a geometric motif organized into a stark yet elegant design, recalling the two vases discussed above. Similar to the vase painted with the *k'in* jaguar pelt motif (MS1370; Figure 1.13), the design is more than the ordering of symbolic motifs or painted representations of other media. On this plate, six *kan* (or "sky") signs are painted on its inner wall, and three *kan* signs are spaced evenly apart on the bottom of the plate, forming an equilateral triangle. These latter three may represent the Three Stones of Creation set into the earth as the first act of the creation of the world by the gods, as recounted in the sixteenth-century Maya epic *Popol Vuh* as well as on the Classic Period Tablet of the Cross at Palenque and on Quiriguá Stela C. The celestial counterpart of these all-important Three Stones of Creation, according to anthropologist Dennis Tedlock, are the three bright stars in the constellation of Orion that form an equilateral triangle whose shape exactly matches that of the three *kan* crosses on plate MS0086.[14] The artist's use of the celestial *kan* cross motif must have been an intentional choice to ensure the correct cosmological interpretation of this geometric pattern as the Three Stones of Creation preserved in the nighttime sky.

Maya painters represented the human figure in a number of ways. As noted above, contour line and color fields were the primary pictorial devices for creating imagery on the pottery. Chiaroscuro, that is, the rendering of shadows caused by light raking across a three-dimensional surface, was never used to represent the

volume of the human figure or any other three-dimensional volume. Maya painters could have done so if they had chosen because they had perfected the use of lighter and darker pigments within solid color fields (cf. MSBV70 and MS11[illegible] [illegible]res 1.18 and 1.19). These nuances of value and color are aesthetic choices lending variation and depth to the color field itself rather than the painters creating the illusion of three dimensions on a two-dimensional plane. The nuances of the body's physical structure are seen primarily in the contour lines, the artists expertly replicating the curvature of muscles, bone and fat. Contemporary sculptures in clay, stone and stucco are clear evidence of the Maya artists' highly successful renderings of the human form (cf. figures [illegible] these lifelike representations highlighting the intentional difference between the sculptural and painting traditions. Simply stated, the aesthetic of Classic Period pottery painting focused on line and shape, not on illusory spatial techniques.

Due to the reliance on contour line to define images, profile views of the human figure predominate, especially in depictions of the head (cf. MS0159; Figure 1.23). Maya painters rarely depict frontal facial views because of the difficulty in using contour lines to represent the volumetric nature of the nose and lips in a fully frontal position. When Maya artists attempted such views, they are awkward representations—this fact certainly did not go unnoticed by the Maya painters, given the rarity of these attempts (cf. MS0071; Figure 1.24).[15] On MS0071, the artist created the eyes of the human figure and the eyes on the face on his hat by doubling the usual profile representation of the ocular orbit, resulting in a cross-eyed effect. The figure's mouth is rendered as a single inverted U-shaped line, and the mouth on the hat also is created by outlining a sausage-shaped form. Neither is particularly representative of the subtle volumetric curves of the human mouth.

1.19 MS1123

The human figure is rendered in a naturalistic manner. The delicacy of outline and coloration of the figures' bodies are the work of an artist who has mastered the difficult medium of slip painting. (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Landon T. Clay.)

1.20

This figurine of an elite Maya woman is typical of the realistic figural sculptural tradition of Campeche, Mexico. She wears a simple huipil (the typical Maya female dress), and a large jade bead is suspended from a twisted cord around her neck. Her elaborate headdress and step-cut hairdo are characteristic of Classic Period female costume. *Also see catalog 42.*

Maya painters used figural viewpoint to convey a person's status. Usually people of secondary importance were represented in profile, such as the seated women on MS1491 (Figure 1.25). The most important figure's body was depicted either frontally or in a way that occupied a lot of pictorial space (cf. MSBV70; Figure 1.18). Maya artists frequently combined the profile and frontal views of the human torso in a single representation. In these instances, usually the head, legs and lower torso were depicted in profile and the shoulders were rotated to the front (cf. MS0159; Figure 1.23). By so doing, the Maya artists freed the figures' arms to be used for symbolic gestures, to give more visual weight to particular figures and to imbue static compositions with increased visual rhythm. For example, the two seated women on MS1491 (Figure 1.25) were depicted in profile and wore very similar costumes, and there was no variation in the colors used in their portraits. The artist broke the visual monotony by depicting frontally one of the woman's shoulders, which gave a different shape to her body and allowed her arms to be upraised in mid-gesture. The artist who painted MS0159 also rotated the profile figure's shoulders to a frontal position (Figure 1.23). This rotation not only gave more visual weight to an otherwise delicate and almost ephemeral figure, but it also allowed the artist to paint the figure's arms outstretched on either side of his torso with fingers extended, implying the motion of the depicted dance.

Maya artists utilized this combination of frontal and profile views of the human body in place of the Occidental pictorial device of foreshortening to represent three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional surface. We notice this combination of viewpoints particularly in such body parts as the feet and hands. Maya painters rarely attempted a frontal representation of the foot, preferring to rotate the legs and feet into a profile view even though the torso was rendered in a frontal position (cf. MS0071; Figure 1.24). Hands were drawn in profile or frontal views with no foreshortening, and overlap was used to indicate the three-dimensional nature of the hand.[16]

In addition to attempting realism, Maya painters were free to explore figural abstraction, at times reducing the human form to its most basic contours and shapes. For example, the artist folds the figure into anatomically difficult positions, adapting it to restricted pictorial spaces such as the long and narrow pictorial field on the low-walled vase MS1138 (Figure 1.26). These seated figures are bent far forward, and their arms and hands are rendered as elongated rectangles. Heads and torsos are little more than ovoid shapes. In spite of this formal abstraction, these are readily recognizable as seated humans, and they are elegant images visually balanced within the restricted space. Maya pottery artists extended their human figural explorations to sculptural forms that existed as three-dimensional representations as well as containers. The Late Classic artists of the Baja Verapaz and upper Motagua River Valley regions of southern Guatemala are noted for sculpted human head vessels whose crania function as lids (cf. MS0820; Figure 1.27).

1.21

[illegible]

1.22

Naturalistic renderings of the hu[illegible] frequently were sculpted in stucco [illegible] attached to the ornamental facade[illegible] ings. These two male heads wear elab[illegible] headgear and large earflares, which impl[illegible] their elite status. The large curving n[illegible] and slightly protruding lower lips were hall[illegible] marks of beauty during the Classic Period (photos by Justin Kerr and Los Angel[illegible] County Museum of Art). *Also* [illegible] *46 and 47*

The Classic Maya tradition of painting on pottery represents a unique artistic expression created by this pre-Columbian culture. Its seeming similarity to Classical Greek painted pottery has contributed to the common misconception of the Classic Maya as the "Greeks of the New World."[17] By this label and its implied application of Classical Greek aesthetic and formal criteria to judge Maya art, we restrict our ability to perceive these paintings on their own terms. This bias predetermines the parameters of representative strategies for imagery and sets boundaries for the art form's aesthetic bases. Instead, we should experience Classic Maya painted pottery on its own terms and enjoy its distinctive aesthetic tradition—which arose from the independent development of civilized thought and expression in the Western Hemisphere.

Pre-Columbian Maya elite painted pottery opens a window into the highly codified and rich culture of the Classic Period. The vessels' expressive imagery rivals the great Islamic manuscript painting tradition and distinguishes itself from Greek pottery as a unique artistic and technical achievement. Similar to the Islamic and Greek traditions, the Classic Maya pottery's pictorial images and hieroglyphic texts are a permanent record of ancient events, both historical and mythical, imagery that was manipulated during the lifetimes of the people for whom the pottery was made. Aesthetically and symbolically, these vessels are reflections of Maya culture

1.23 MS0159 (*opposite and above*)
The dancer's shoulders are rotated to a frontal position, which gives more visual weight to an otherwise delicate figure. This position also allows the artist to render the dancer's arms outstretched on either side of his torso, with fingers extended to imply the motion of his dance. *Also see catalog 43*

1.24 MS0071

Maya artists rarely depict frontal views of the human face because of the difficulty in rendering three-dimensional forms using only contour lines. Here both the dancer's face and the anthropomorphic visage on his hat are depicted in full frontal view, which draws attention to this figure as an important participant in the scene.

because they are the personalized expressions of individuals who created these paintings on ceramic in response to their society's particular needs. The vessels were used as elite service ware, as social currency, as symbols of status and power and also as treasured items of ideological importance to be placed with the honored dead. Thus it is the fabric of the social and political context in which this pottery functioned that cries out for understanding—not only the pictorial representations and hieroglyphic texts per se nor the archaeological ceramic typology and chronology, however fascinating and revealing these may be.

Linda Schele aptly has observed that in creating pictorial images and hieroglyphic texts, the Maya were not speaking to us; that is, we are not the intended audience.[18] However, the Maya certainly were aware of the longevity of art, given their own interest in the artistic creations of earlier Mesoamerican cultures such as the Olmec. Polychrome pottery's technical achievement as an extremely durable record in low-fire ceramic attests to Maya realization of the potential perpetuity of these objects—that later peoples would see them and read the encoded messages. Of course, the Maya did not presage Western civilization, but their own interest in ancient art and in creating lasting artistic statements is direct evidence of their awareness of the timelessness of art and its ability to communicate across time and space.

1.25 MS1491

The seated male's position on the right side of the pictorial composition—and his corpulence—lend him greater visual weight and serve to identify him as the central figure. The profile views of the seated women on the left give them lesser visual weight and imply their secondary importance here. *Also see catalog 41.*

1.26 MS1138

The seated human figures become stylized abstractions as the artist folds the human forms to fit into the restricted pictorial space on this low globular vase. *Also see catalog 45.*

The aesthetic, symbolic, ideological and historical features of Classic Maya polychrome pottery speak to us across the chasms of time and culture. These exceptional ceramic vessels also open a window into the highly complex social and political spheres of the time. Studying the imagery reveals the encoded historical, cosmological and aesthetic messages. As art critic Lucy Lippard has said, "Archaeology is not the only valid method of gardening in graveyards."[19] This ancient imagery gives faces to the powerful men and women of Maya society as well as to the individual artists whose works preserve the historical moments and most fundamental beliefs of this great civilization. Here even the dead can speak, at least to the extent that words and images, painting styles and aesthetics find fruitful ground in our eyes and minds.

Western Aesthetics, Pre-Columbian Art History and Stylistic Analysis in the Pursuit of Culture History

It is not my intention to dismiss connoisseurship or the right of each age to its ethnocentric aesthetic, but to note that the history of taste is a story of constantly shifting attitudes which are not cumulative, and which are neither inevitable nor infallible beyond the moment they are in favor.

—Roy Sieber

What constitutes art, who is empowered to identify art, and which cultures' creations embody "True Art" are questions with no concrete answers that endure beyond the moment in which they are presented. From the viewpoint of the Western tradition, this is especially true for the material culture of non-European-based societies. Western recognition of non-Western art is vulnerable to historical events, education and sociocultural fashion, all of which strongly affect the criteria by

1.27 MS0830

This cache vessel is sculpted in the form of a human face with broad cheeks and large lips. Similar vessels have been found in the southern highlands of Guatemala, although none has such a realistic rendering of the cranium as this vessel's lid. *Also see catalog 19.*

which objects are designated as art. It is true that the all important "eye" of art recognition is a product of history as well as of education.[20] As anthropologist Marshall Sahlins wrote, "There is no such thing as an immaculate perception."[21]

It follows that there cannot be a pure aesthetic response devoid of cultural factors. We perceive art in terms of pre-formed categories we have learned as part of the human processes of enculturation and education. Art historian John Berger has noted that what we see and what we know cannot be disentangled because this process is intimately related to the categories of organization we learn from our culture.[22] Art historian Joseph Alsop explains this phenomenon by pointing out that when we see a Picasso painting, we do not perceive the painting as an isolated creation existing in a void. Instead, we see "Category=Picasso, Category Picasso=Great Painting, ergo this is a Great Painting."[23] Therefore, we recognize an object of high art through the mental process of categorization and not through a subliminal aesthetic response.

The aesthetic eye is an organ of tradition, and the Western eye is steeped in the aesthetics of European art history.[24] This tradition is the basis for the categories of art we carry as part of our European heritage. Because of this tradition and the categorical nature of art perception, pre-Columbian Maya pictorial pottery from the Classic Period (A.D. 250–850) has not been widely recognized as one of the world's great painting traditions. Four of the primary characteristics of these paintings on ceramic lie outside the canons of European fine art; this has led to the categorization of these works as craft (that is, "not-quite-art"), or at least not equal to fine art emanating from the Western tradition.

First, the Western tradition teaches that great paintings are created in oils and tempera. Thus great painting cannot be actualized using slip-based paints on low-fire pottery.[25] Second, the Western tradition holds that great painting is created on flat surfaces, that is, on canvas (framed and hung on the wall) and on stuccoed walls, both of which become static parts of the immediate environment. Thus great painting will not be found on cylindrical surfaces, especially ones that also serve an active functional role as pottery containers for food or other contents. Third, the subject matter of great art in the Western tradition flows from a common background in Greek, Judeo-Christian and European history and mythology; in the representation of landscapes, portraiture and still lifes; and in the purely personal figurative and nonfigurative expression of the individual artist who signs her/his work. Because the subject matter of Classic Maya pictorial pottery has appeared devoid of

these themes and has been impenetrable to the Western eye and mind, as well as having been created in a nefarious void seemingly lacking ateliers and named artists, Maya pictorial ceramics have not been perceived as great painting.

Last, the Western tradition has consigned pre-Columbian art to the category of "primitive" art. This classification holds that primitive artists are more in tune with the primal forces of the human spirit and that their works express the communal ideas of the group, not the refined sensibilities of the individual.[26] Therefore, great painting will not be found in Classic Maya art because until recently the artists remained anonymous —in contrast to the Western tradition, which focuses on the individual and the signed work of art. Further, no history of aesthetic development and refinement has been recognized in pre-Columbian Maya pottery painting. In terms of subject matter, even the great Maya scholar J. Eric S. Thompson stated that the primary interest of Maya artists was to reproduce the aspects of each of the Maya gods and to conform to the traditional style of representation.[27] This assessment left no latitude for the recognition of individual expression nor for the possibility of Maya artistic exploration outside the proscribed communal interests. Thus, the Western eye places Classic Maya painted pottery into the "primitive art" category, ending any consideration of these works as great paintings.[28]

The goal of this book is to help create a new category that will admit Classic Maya pictorial pottery into the aesthetic arena as one of the world's great painting traditions. By so doing, we can move away from the purely Western criteria upon which are dependent our aesthetic responses. Armed with this new category, we are more free to explore what is and is not art on a broader scale. This new category may even allow us to leave behind the contemporary Western perception of pre-Columbian Maya art as primitive art stemming from the primal forces and devoid of individual expression, aesthetic sensibilities and civilized refinement.

Anthropologist Robert Layton discusses two approaches to the definition of art that are applicable across cultural boundaries, although he stresses that neither has universal application. One deals in aesthetics and the other treats art as a mode of communication distinguished by a particularly adept use of images.[29] Layton also believes that aesthetics and symbolism constitute alternative realizations of a more general goal, and that this overarching purpose is the core of art which itself is connected directly to the underlying beliefs of a society, including social, political, economic and religious ideologies. Artists constantly make aesthetic and communicative decisions during the creative process through a continual ordering of their ethnocentric historical and aesthetic knowledge and categorizations thereof, regardless of their cultural and historical affiliations. It follows that a pursuit of the meaning of art objects can lead to greater understanding of a culture, given that the art work is a reflection of the culture in and for which the object was created.

Layton's dual approach focusing on aesthetics and communication is central to this study of Classic Maya pictorial pottery. It is only by fostering a recognition of the aesthetic qualities of Maya pictorial pottery and an understanding of the messages embedded in these paintings on ceramic that we can create for ourselves a conceptual category wherein these objects can reclaim their full impact upon the eye and the mind. Through this investigation, we may also begin to understand the roles played by this ceramic art among the people who created it.

Although this study takes a more anthropological approach and treats art and aesthetics as an integral part of cultural behavior, we do not deny the fact that a sense of aesthetics is inherent to all humans regardless of cultural background. Art historian George Kubler suggests that aesthetics originate in limbic neurology and therefore are integral to the human condition. Kubler's view follows anthropologist Robert Lowie's, who has written that the aesthetic impulse is one of the irreducible components of the human mind.[30] The creation of a category of great painting within which the twentieth-century Westerner can place pre-Columbian Maya pictorial pottery, then, may be equally about current Western aesthetics as it is about pre-Columbian ones.

This book focuses on the Classic Period painted vessels that were created specifically to function within the uppermost levels of Maya society. These ceramics were made for the Maya elite and, as such, are unique items lying outside the usual pottery production of the day as well as outside the analytical pottery typologies central to archaeological investigations (see Appendix 1). Because each vessel represents a unique moment in Classic Maya art history, its singularity brings into focus that specific historical moment.[31]

Although these vessels represent a very small proportion of ceramic production and many lack the archaeological contextual data so critical to sociocultural investigations, it is precisely each vessel's uniqueness that makes the corpus valuable in piecing together a clearer picture of Late Classic Maya society. The minute details of imagery, hieroglyphic texts, painting style and technological features can provide keys to Classic Maya culture.[32] These pictorial ceramics, and especially those with archaeological context, provide fruitful ground for sociocultural investigations because their production, painted imagery and subsequent use are closely related to the social, economic and cosmological systems and ideologies that were the foundations of Classic Maya society.

These elite pottery vessels are important for our reconstruction and understanding of pre-Columbian Maya society because we know the culture mostly through studies of its archaeological remains, and these remains do not represent the full spectrum of ancient Maya society. The eschewing of any subset of cultural information serves only to restrict the pursuit of recreating the fabric of that culture. In the study of an ancient culture, there already has been such great selectivity in what has survived that we must at least examine all information that affords itself. In addition we must examine the data from a multiplicity of viewpoints, including those of art history, linguistics, religious studies, etc. If we ignore subsets of information and at the same time take only an archaeological approach to cultural remains, we risk missing important pieces of the historical puzzle; worse yet, our own selectivity may send us down the wrong path into a blind alley. Elite art objects are important material reflections of the culture that created them and they can provide plenteous ground for the modern researcher.

Although we can revel in the current "democratic ascendancy of archaeology as the science of garbage," it is deceptive and disingenuous to ignore art as an integral part of being human.[33] Garbage and art always have existed side-by-side, one never superseding nor replacing the other. Therefore, a balanced approach to all material remains of an ancient society is more true to that society and to the pursuit of knowledge about it.

Notes

[illegible] Maya [illegible] Classic Period Classic [illegible] fragmentary [illegible] applied [illegible] paper of [illegible]

[illegible] complexities of [illegible] Maya [illegible] are too exten[illegible] here. The reader [illegible] number of excellent recent [illegible] these social, eco[illegible] complexities, includ[illegible] A. Chase (1992), Culbert [illegible] and Schele and [illegible]

[illegible] in-depth studies of [illegible] styles, combined with [illegible] excavations, it [illegible] possible to investigate painting [illegible] part of the sociopolitical [illegible] site similar to the man[illegible] which we now are able to utilize [illegible] the monumental tradition.

[illegible] Kelley [illegible] has stated that "The intellectual and aesthetic appeal of Maya culture does [illegible] distort our perception [illegible] Maya realities. Temporal and spa[illegible] variation tend to be ironed out of our perceptions, along with facets of the cul[illegible]

[illegible] the [illegible] printing styles and provide a partial ordering of the styles and, when possible, to apply temporal information. In the coming years, this all important temporal aspect will be better integrated into our investigations. It is hoped that this book will broaden archaeologist's interest in the elite ceramics so that the critical temporal data stemming from their excavations will include acknowledgment of the stylistically defined elite ceramics. In this way, more specific temporal and contextual data should become readily available.

5. See Robert Santley (1989:131). Craft specialization among the Classic Maya, at least in terms of the elite painted pottery, certainly was not a highly centralized endeavor. Instead, production of these wares was decentralized, as was the control over resources and patterns of procurement and distribution. This decentralization reflects the fragmentary nature of the sociopolitical structure that characterizes the Classic Period. During the first millennium A.D., scores of competing polities rose and fell in power, and each one's control over resources and distribution was in direct proportion to the ever-changing amount of control each had over their immediate area and the surrounding regions.

6. Robert Santley (1989:131) also states that craft specialization in the Maya lowlands represents a decentralized system. The elite pictorial pottery supports this [illegible] Hirth [illegible] and the production [illegible] such commodities as [illegible] other materials intended for consumption by broader segments of Maya society than were the intended "consumers" of the elite painted pottery. The artistic specialists who created these wares probably represent a fractional percentage of the population at any site and came into existence primarily through sociopolitical factors directly linked to the ruling elite rather than to wider economic forces. Therefore, craft specialization of so called consumer goods versus the elite painted pottery represent two different subsets of Classic Period production.

7. This lack of distinction between writing and painting also is reflected in the singularity of the Maya scribe's painter's implement—that is, the brush—as well as in the painterly nature of both Maya writing and Maya art. Even the carved stone panels, such as those from Palenque, first were painted with the imagery that then was carved into the stone (cf. Schele and Miller 1986:59). These carved images still retain the curvilinearity of the brush stroke.

8. Although achieved in different ways, Maya vase painting recalls Islamic manuscript painting, which is simultaneously two-dimensional and three-dimensional in its implication of space. Both utilize

multiple ground lines and overlapping figures to imply three dimensions. There is a marked difference between the two traditions, however, because Islamic manuscript painting implies three dimensions through the use of vanishing points and chiaroscuro, two pictorial devices not found in the repertoire of Maya vase painting.

9. See Winter (1986:27) for her original discussion of autonomous narrative in ancient Near Eastern art.

10. See Reents-Budet (1989) for a discussion of interactive narrative as one of the primary characteristics of most Maya art. Also see Berlo (1983).

11. Mary Ellen Miller independently arrived at this same conclusion in a paper delivered at a symposium at the XVII Maya Hieroglyphic Workshop at Texas (March 18, 1993; University of Texas at Austin).

12. The simplicity of form within the elite pictorial pottery is particularly notable when compared to all pottery vessels created during the Classic Period. Unslipped, monochrome and some bichrome vessels display a wide range of vessel shapes and appendages within each form class, since these simply decorated wares generally did not function in the same ways as the pictorial ceramics within the elite stratum (see Sabloff, 1975:22–27).

13. Pots painted to recall woven basketry are not common. The corpus includes a tall cylinder vase in the bodega of the Instituto de Antropología E Historia, Guatemala City (its chemical sample number in the Smithsonian archive is MSM312). Carolyn Tate brought to my attention a cylinder vase painted with a similar step-fret motif and thin horizontal banding representing the individual coils of the basket. Another similar, although much more crudely rendered vase is found in the Maya Photographic Archive, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC (archive number FC-cb2-548). Woven baskets whose shapes are more basin- or platelike are rendered on the Yaxchilan carved stone lintels (cf. Lintel 24) and also on various polychrome vases published by Michael Coe (cf. 1973:104; 1975:22).

14. Dennis Tedlock (1985:261); also see Schele (1992:121–126). Dennis Tedlock identified the three stars as Alnitak, Saiph and Rigel, which together form an equilateral triangle. Tedlock also made the connection of these three stars/stones with the three hearth stones of the typical Quiché kitchen hearth. Interestingly, a cloudy area is found in the center of these three bright stars in Orion. This cloudy area is the Great Nebula M42, and Tedlock suggests it represents the fire in the center of the hearth.

15. In addition to being found on a few pottery vessels, frontal views of the human face are found in the Bonampak murals (M. E. Miller, 1986:Plate 40) and sculpted on various stone monuments such as Naranjo Stela 24. The stone sculptural traditions at Copan and Piedras Negras also utilized frontal representations, but these are true three-dimensional carved representations of the human visage rather than painted ones relying on contour line.

16. The painters frequently rendered a figure with two left or two right hands. Seemingly they placed more importance on depicting the hand gesture itself rather than on the anatomically correct replication of the human hand. See Virginia Miller (n.d.) for an analysis of gesture in Maya art.

17. Although a thorough comparison of the two traditions holds promise for enlightened understanding of both, Classic Maya pictorial polychrome pottery is an independent painting tradition with its own sui generis aesthetic, and its exploration should not be based upon Classical Greek pottery comparisons. Suffice it to say that the two resemble each other in their application of pictorial imagery to the surface of pottery, sharing the basic technology of painting with slips (that is, terra sigilatta) on low-fire ceramics, and that these vessels played a utilitarian role as food service ware. However, the two represent very different traditions in a number of ways. From a formal perspective, although both rely heavily upon contour line to create images, Classical Greek pottery painting remained primarily a graphic tradition with origins in incised metalwork, whereas Maya pictorial pottery began and developed as a purely painterly tradition. Polychrome painting was integral to the aesthetics of Maya pictorial pottery, unlike the largely bichromatic Greek tradition. Among the Maya, calligraphy was an important part of the visual and intellectual aesthetics of the composition, whereas the Greek tradition lacks calligraphy as a primary design feature and aesthetic. Maya hieroglyphic texts also were important carriers of both overt and covert social meanings, unlike the majority of texts found on Greek pottery. Functionally, Maya pictorial ceramics were an aristocratic ware and played a sociopolitical role, whereas Classical Greek pottery was more quotidian in its intended audience and functioned in a less politicized manner. The two tradi

[illegible] for example. Separating these two traditions are such art historical criteria as polychromy and the creative use of color, the rendering of three dimensional space through an exploration of geometry, and object function. The two traditions also remain separated by their media, that is to say, the Western tradition generally does not give the same artistic weight to painting on pottery as it does to painting on canvas.

26. See S. Price (1991) for a broad discussion of non-Western art.

27. J. Eric S. Thompson (1975:203).

28. If there is any question as to the continued categorization of pre-Columbian art as non-art, one only has to visit the library at the Center for the Advanced Study of the Visual Arts (CASVA), National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Here the books on pre-Columbian art are categorized and housed in the "non-art" (CASVA's terminology) section of the library.

29. Layton (1981:4–5).

30. Kubler (1991:178); Lowie (1924:266).

31. A focus on elite objects currently is out of fashion among some pre-Columbian scholars who believe this is non-productive in terms of reconstructing Classic Maya culture because, in the case of Maya pictorial ceramics, this subset of Maya ceramic production represents such a minuscule portion of the culture and has little connection to the major forces driving the society. A second reason for the lack of scholarly interest in the elite polychrome pottery is the current thrust of Maya research, whose aim is the development of theories of cultural change. The investigation of pre-Columbian culture history currently is more of an abstract endeavor to [illegible] the critical questions, as opposed to [illegible] the understanding of objects and how they functioned in the culture is a primary goal. Although this book is not the appropriate venue in which to engage in extensive methodological debate, I believe that both approaches can make unique and important contributions to the pursuit of understanding the pre-Columbian Maya.

32. Elizabeth Graham (1987:271) has discussed the seminal importance of these kinds of details as the key to pre-Columbian Maya history. Although Graham makes this statement in reference to the different kinds of survival strategies developed by different groups throughout the Maya lowlands during Terminal Classic times when Maya society was collapsing, nevertheless her point is well taken. In pursuit of the larger picture, we cannot afford to ignore the minutiae. These minutiae stem from the high degree of variability in the decentralized and complex social, economic and political systems that characterize the Classic Period.

33. For example, see Wylie (1992), who seems to eschew the study of monuments and art, perceiving these objects as not important to the goals of archaeology.

2. Classic Maya Pottery Painters

2.1 MS1687

Codex-style plate with image of seated artist painting in a codex. *Also see catalog 1.*

2.2 MS0347 *(detail)*

Codex-style vase with seated artists, one painting in a codex and the other holding a carved human mask. *Also see catalog 4.*

The Classic Period painter makes frequent appearances on the pictorial pottery, and occasionally in stone sculpture, depicted as the central image (figures 2.1 and 2.2) or as a participant in multifaceted scenes (figures 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5).[1] The Maya artist is identified pictorially by elements of costume and by the objects he holds. Of these, a painter is recognized immediately by his brandishing a poised paint brush and holding a paint container (figures 2.6, 2.7a, b). The most commonly depicted paint container is made from a cross-sectioned conch shell whose central area is painted black (figures 2.2 and 2.3). This blackened area probably represents the shell's cavity filled with paint. Although rare, these carved containers have survived, including one from the collection of the Princeton Art Museum whose chamber still contains paint and whose owner was an elite man who may have been a ruler (Figure 2.8a–c), and another excavated from an elite tomb at Holmul.[2] A third is carved in the form of a human hand (Figure 2.9), its gesture replicating that made by artists depicted on the polychrome pottery (cf. Figure 2.2). Underscoring the halved conch shell as the quintessential artist's paint container is the unusual vessel from the tomb of the Tikal ruler *Hasaw Ka'an K'awil* (Figure 2.10).[3] This paint pot is made from ceramic yet is sculpted in the form of a halved conch shell. Painted on its inside surface is a hieroglyph that seems to read *cuch* or *cuch-ah*, whose meanings in Chol and Yucatec include "storage place," "container" and "place for liquid." In addition, the Yucatec word *cuchil sabak* means "inkwell." Each of these is directly connected to the concept of a container for a liquid substance such as paint and would be an appropriate glyphic marker for a vessel created specifically as an artist's paint container.[4] Stone sculptural renditions of the painter/scribe holding a halved conch shell paint container and brush have been found at Copán, where they embellish a building in an elite residential compound in which royal artists may have gathered and lived (Figure 2.11a, b).[5]

The halved conch shell as paint container persists into the post-Classic Period among the Aztecs of highland Mexico. In discussing the exceptional artistic achievements of Aztec feather workers, the sixteenth-century Dominican friar Bartolomé de Las Casas writes: "The activity in which they seem to excel over all other human intellects and which makes them appear unique among the nations of the earth is the craft they have perfected of representing with real feathers, in all their natural colors, all the things that they and other excellent painters can paint with brushes. . . . *Just as their painters took paint from different shells or containers*

2.3 MS0059

Two artists sit inside a building, one carving (or painting) a human mask and the other with poised stylus ready to paint in a codex. A shell paint container sits atop the closed codex. *Also see catalog 2.*

in which they kept their colors [author's emphasis], so the feather worker had his little boxes or jars in which he kept these feathers, each kind or color being kept separate from the others."[6] The longevity of the halved conch shell as the preferred paint pot may be explained by its practical features. First, the interior shell surface is very smooth and hard. It does not absorb water, and it provides a slick surface upon which the artist continuously can mix the paint to ensure an appropriate distribution of pigment within the water-based paints. Second, unlike ceramic and wood, the shell surface resists wear. Thus there is less chance of contamination of the paint with bits of wood or ceramic from an eroding paint pot. And third, the cut side of the shell provides an outstanding edge against which the artist can drag his brush to maintain the correct amount of paint on the brush as well as to shape the brush's point. It is not surprising, then, that most depictions of Classic Maya painters holding paint pots hold these halved conch shells.[7]

In addition to the halved-shell paint pots, Maya painter/scribes frequently are rendered holding paintbrushes. From these renderings, we know that Maya artists painted with different kinds of brushes. One type has hair bristles attached to the end of a hollow tube and closely resembles watercolor and calligraphy brushes found throughout the world (Figure 2.7a).[8] A second painting implement is characterized by a stiff shaft and a flaccid but pointed end (cf. figures 2.4 and 2.7b), recalling the brushes used by modern Hopi pottery painters from the American Southwest and made from looped fibers of the yucca plant.[9] Yucca fiber brushes are par-

2.4 [illegible]

Codex-style vase depicting a scene in the Maya underworld. God L presides inside his palace in the company of young women. A supernatural rabbit-scribe sits in front of the palace and paints in an opened codex. (The Art Museum, Princeton University, Museum Purchase, gift of the Hans and Dorothy Widenmann Foundation.)

Also see catalog 89

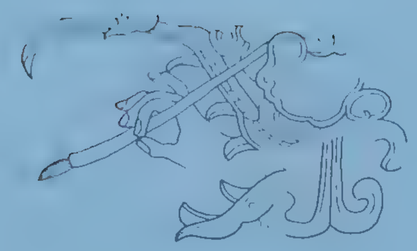
25

2.6

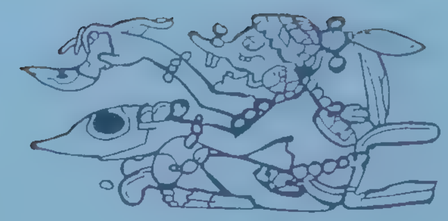
ticularly suited to pottery slip paints because their strength holds in suspension the inherently heavy slip paints, yet it allows the artist to make extremely fine lines.[10] A broad version of this type of fiber brush makes it possible to paint a long, wide and textured line with internal slip variability (that is, visual texture), caused by the variable amounts of slip paint laid down by the fibers (Figure 2.12).

A third kind of painting tool depicted in Maya art resembles a stylus (figures 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.13a, b). It is characterized by no change in shape or form from shaft to tip, suggesting that the implement is rigid from end to end, much like those used by scribes in ancient Egypt and the Near East. Unlike the paint brushes, this styluslike implement usually is held by the thumb and forefinger on one side of its shaft and by the three remaining fingers stabilizing the stylus on its other side (figures 2.13a, 2.13b).

Classic Maya artists worked in media other than paint, creating two- and three-dimensional masterpieces in stone, wood, paper and stucco. Although only a few of the fragile wood, paper and stucco sculptures remain, these lost creations survive as depictions on the polychrome pottery. For example, the pre-Columbian books made from stucco-covered paper are frequently rendered, along with the scribal painters who either hold or sit in front of these codices (figures 2.14 and 2.15). Sculptors also are depicted, either creating the thousands of



2.7a



2.7b

now-lost masks made of wood, wood and stucco, ceramic or stone (figures 2.2, 2.3, 2.5 and 2.16), holding their carving tools (Figure 2.17) or carving a stone sculpture (Figure 2.18).[11]

Costume played an important symbolic role in Classic Maya society, identifying a person's social status and profession. Not surprisingly, then, the court painter/scribe was afforded a particular costume and personal adornment, including long hair elegantly wrapped in a simple cloth into which sometimes is stuck a paint brush (figures 2.1, 2.2, 2.6 and 2.19a–c) and a turbanlike spangled headdress made of cloth (figures 2.2, 2.3, 2.5 and 2.19c).[12] It should be noted, however, that the spangled headdress alone does not always identify an artist or the scene as one of artistic production because this headdress is worn by other individuals in scenes with no indication of artistic activity (figures 2.20 and 2.21).[13]

Two symbolic icons also identify the artist; a deer ear tucked behind the artist's ear and the so-called "print-out" icon, which usually emerges from under the arm of the artist or from his mouth.[14] The deer ear is found on renditions of both human and supernatural (or monkey-men) artists (Figure 2.22a, b) and probably relates to pre-Columbian mythology connecting artists and deer. The

2.5 MS0173

The supernatural artists *Hun Batz* and *Hun Chuen* are joined by a vulture-headed artist who holds a carved mask.

2.6 MS1432

Seated artist/scribes hold poised paintbrush and halved-shell paint container. Note the "print-out" icon emerging from under their arms which identifies painter/scribes. *Also see catalog 5.*

2.7

The artist's hand and tools, including his paintbrush and paint container (drawings by Barbara MacLeod).

a. Tikal MT53; an artist's hand, holding a paintbrush, emerges from the maw of a supernatural saurian.

b. Supernatural monkey-man scribe depicted on a polychrome bowl (after M. Coe, 1973).

a.

b.

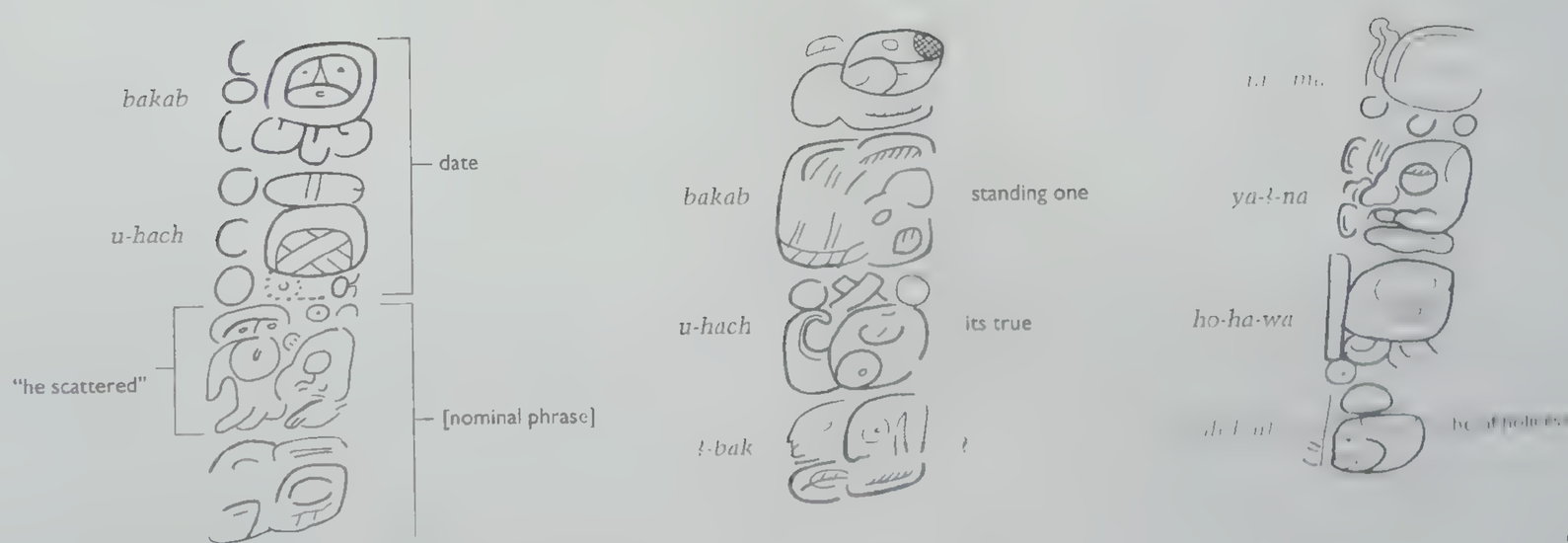
2.8

Halved conch shell paint container with the remains of pre-Columbian red paint inside its chamber. The hieroglyphic text incised on its back records a sacrificial Period Ending rite that took place on 17 March, A.D. 761 and was performed by an elite person who probably also was the owner of the paint container. His titles imply he was a ruler as well as being an artist/scribe. (Princeton Collections of Western Americana. Princeton University Libraries. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Frank E. Taplin, Jr.) *Also see catalog 6*

a. Interior view.

b. Exterior view.

c. Drawing of hieroglyphic text incised on the exterior (drawing by D. Reents-Budet).



print-out icon probably represents a strip of *amate* paper from which pre-Columbian codices were made (figures 2.19b and 2.25b). In one instance, the print-out icon ends in a flower that probably is the blossom of the *amate* tree (figures 2.19a, b). In all renditions of this icon, the strip is covered with bar-and-dot numerals that may refer to the rows of mathematical computations frequently found in the pre-Columbian Maya codices. The artists who created these books may have been the same as those who painted the polychrome pottery, or at least they were trained in the same knowledge sets and thus necessarily would have been well-schooled in both the historical and mythological pictorial programs as well as in mathematics, astronomy and calendrical calculations.

During pre-Columbian times, the role of artist was not restricted to humans. Many vessels' scenes depict supernatural beings engaged in artistic pursuits. One of the most artistically active supernaturals is God N, who paints and carves masks (Figure 2.16). God N's pre-Columbian name is *Pawahtun*, a title often carried by scribes. The association of *Pawahtun* with the scribal arts is underscored by the sculpted *pawahtuns* who support the carved stone bench found inside Structure 9N-82 at Copán, an architectural compound that probably was the residence and/or meeting place of artists and scribes (Figure 2.11a).[15]

In the post-Classic Madrid Codex, many gods are depicted carving masks or painting in codices, including the Maize God (God E) (figures 2.23a and 2.24a) and *Itzamná* (God D) (Figure 2.23b). Note the glyph for "carve" in the text above *Itzamná*, where the axe carving tool is the glyphic logograph for the verb "carve" (Figure 2.23b). The Classic Period sculpting tool as depicted on the Emiliano Zapata Tablet (Figure 2.18) more closely resembles those brandished by Mixtec carvers depicted in the Codex Vindobonensis (Figure 2.24b). These carving tools have a wooden shaft with specially flaked stone set into the handles' ends—in contrast to the post-Classic sculpting tools, which are either a sharpened bone awl or an axe made from a flint blade hafted perpendicularly to its wide handle.

The gods also were painters. *Itzamná* (God D) and God C are depicted in the codices sitting in front of buildings and holding a paint pot and brush (Figure 2.25a). *Itzamná* is the supernatural credited by the post-Classic Maya with inventing writing. The glyphic text above God C reads *u-ts'ib God C*, "his writing/painting God C." This is the same *u-ts'ib* verbal phrase found

2.9

Shell paint container carved in the shape of an artist's gesturing hand. *See catalog 8*

2.10

Ceramic paint container sculpted in the form of a halved conch shell, from the tomb of the Tikal ruler *Hasaw Ka'an K'awil*. *Also see catalog 7*

2.11

a. Copán Structure 9N-82, adorned with sculptures depicting Maya painters.

b. Sculpture from Structure 9N-82 of an artist holding a paint container and stylus.

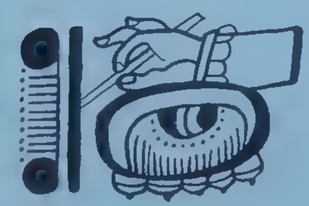
2.12 MS0639

The wide and textured bands of color on this vase were created by a broad, stiff fiber brush.

2.12

in the Primary Standard Sequence (PSS). In most Mayan languages, no distinction is made between writing and painting. This lack of distinction implies conceptual equivalency of these two artistic activities and the same lack of distinction between artists and scribes. For the Maya, then, using a brush or a styluslike implement to paint images on paper or pottery was one and the same process. The rain god *Chac* (God B) also is depicted painting in the post-Classic codices (Figure 2.25b). Note the print-out icon, which hangs from his mouth rather than emerging from under his arm, as is typical during the preceding Classic Period.

In Classic Period art, the most frequently depicted supernatural painter/scribes are *Hun Batz* and *Hun Chuen*, or "One Monkey" and "One Artisan" (figures 2.5, 2.15, and 2.22a, b). They also were the supernatural



a.

b

2.13

Maya artist/scribes holding stylus-like painting implements (drawings by Barbara MacLeod).

a. Hieroglyph for *ah-ts'ib* ("he the painter") from a polychrome dish.

b. A seated artist/scribe paints in a codex. *Also see catalog 4.*

2.14 MS1072

A corpulent scribe sits with his codex.
Also see catalog 3

patrons of the visual arts, of singers and of flutists.[16] These supernaturals were the half-brothers of the Hero Twins *Hunahpu* and *Xbalanque* of the great Quiché Maya epic tale the *Popol Vuh* who were turned into monkeys because of their arrogance and abuse of the Hero Twins.[17] *Hun Batz's* and *Hun Chuen's* simian nature is reflected in both their names. *Batz* is the word for spider monkey in many Mayan languages, and *chuen* or *choven* is archaic Yucatec Mayan for howler monkey.[18] It is not surprising, then, that these supernatural patrons of the arts were depicted by the Classic Maya painters with monkeylike characteristics. Note their flattened foreheads, extended noses and muzzles with scraggly beards that recall the face of a simian rather than the standard Classic Maya human countenance.

The depictions of *Hun Batz* and *Hun Chuen* include the deer ear tucked into their headdresses and the print-out icon.[19] In addition to these simian artists, other figures whose features combine human and zoomorph characteristics take on artistic roles. A vulture-headed sculptor paints in a codex on MS0059 (Figure 2.3) and holds a mask on MS0173 (figures 2.5 and 2.26a), and a purely zoomorphic rabbit paints in a codex (Figure 2.26b).[20]

The visual boundary between supernatural and human artists rarely is clear in Maya art, implying a suprahuman (supernatural) status for the Maya artist that may be traced to the late pre-Classic Period (250 B.C.–A.D. 250). Izapa Stela 5 is carved with a pictorial narrative of the creation of humanity wherein an artist is sculpting (i.e., creating) a human being. This sculptor's role in the Creation strongly suggests his supernatural status, although he is rendered in a purely human fashion.[21] Suprahuman status for artists continues during the Classic Period and is especially notable on a vase from the collection of the National Museum of the American Indian (figures 2.27b, c). Here the artist signed his work in the usual place at the end of the PSS following the *u-ts'ib* glyph ("his painting/writing"). Instead of writing his personal name, however, the artist painted a full-figure portrait of himself writing in a codex, a portrait that includes the print-out icon, which usually marks supernatural artists. He further blurred the boundary by placing a larger portrait of himself within the mythological scene painted on the vase. He includes the print-out icon underneath his arm and signs the vase a second time in the short glyphic text in front of his pictorial representation. Although his

personal name is eroded, the phrase includes the *cuch* logograph of the artist's halved-shell paint container, an example of which sits below the main supernatural figure.[22] By painting himself into the mythological scene and marking himself with supernatural icons, the artist effectively equates himself with the supernatural realm and lessens the psychological distance between his humanity and the deified artistic beings of Maya mythology.

The recurrent depictions of the pre-Columbian artist in historical scenes on the pottery strongly imply that he was an important individual in Maya society. From these pictorial records, we see that artists kept company with the elite, sitting on or next to rulers' thrones (Figure 2.3). They wore elaborate clothing and fine jewelry, had aristocratic bearing and were well-fed, suggesting that the artists were an integral part of elite Maya society (figures 2.1, 2.2, and 2.14).

Underscoring their importance is the fact that artists sometimes signed their works, placing their signatures at the end of the PSS. Signatures recorded their personal names and/or titles as follows: *u-ts'ib*—[personal name or title]—*its'at* (that is "his painting/writing—[personal name or title]—artist/sage.")[23] In every case, the signed vessel is among the finest examples of Classic Period pottery painting. Artists' signatures are unique to the Maya among all pre-Columbian peoples.[24] With the decipherment of this phrase, and after more than one thousand years, Maya artists emerge from nameless obscurity and take their places among the renowned master painters of the world.

The *u-ts'ib* nominal phrase is found both in the PSS and in short phrases painted within the pictorial scenes on the vases (figures 2.20, 2.27c and 2.28a–c). The signed

2.15 MS0176

The supernatural artists *Hun Batz* and *Hun Chuen* hold codices on their laps with paint containers sitting on top of the books.

2.16 MS0728

God N carves or paints a mask. (Collection of the Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquín, Guatemala.)

vessels all are distinguishable one from the other based on criteria of style, and the signatory nominal glyphs on each are unique, substantiating their identification as the personal names of the painters. Corroboration is provided by two vases painted in the same style and by the same hand, and both are signed with the same artist's name (figures 2.29a, b).[25]

In at least two artists' signatures, the *ts'ib* glyph is prefixed with the male pronoun *ah*, reading "he the painter/writer" (figures 2.27b, c), and all known Classic Period representations of artists are male. There is no known artist's signature that begins with the female pronoun *na'*, although there is one instance where a woman carries the title of *Na' ts'ib*, or "Lady Scribe."[26] The combined evidence points to a male-dominated profession with the majority of master painters of the Classic Period being men.

Given the importance of the artist to Maya elite culture, it is puzzling that most of the greatest works of Classic Period art are not signed by the artists.[27] An explanation may be found in the *Popol Vuh*. *Hun Batz* and *Hun Chuen* (One Monkey and One Artisan), the half-brothers of the Hero Twins, were renowned artists, flutists and singers. However, they were arrogant, deceitful, and angered by and jealous of their half-brothers. As punishment for their antisocial behavior, they were transformed into monkeys. This turn of events is recorded in the *Popol Vuh*: "So they [*Hun Batz* and *Hun Chuen*] were prayed to by the flutists and singers among

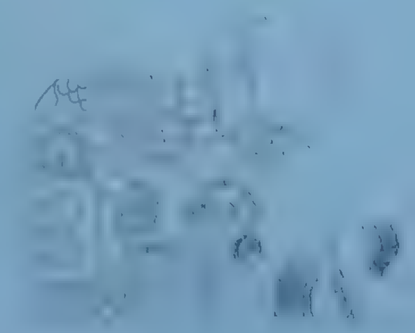
the ancient people, and the writers and carvers prayed to them. In ancient times they turned into animals, they became monkeys, because they just magnified themselves, they abused their younger brothers. Just as they wished them to be slaves, so they themselves were brought low. One Monkey and One Artisan were lost then, they became animals, and this is now their place forever."[28] Perhaps among the Classic Maya it was considered more acceptable for an artist to remain humble and not to abuse his social rank and creative powers. Under such circumstances, the artist's anonymous creation of an object would be considered virtuous. Only in a few special instances would the artist be freed from social restraints and sign his creations. The special instances may have included those art objects created to be used as social currency and to be presented as formal gifts by an *ahaw* to another elite individual. The master artist's signature would imbue the vessel with added prestige and thus increase its social value.[29] Therefore, an artist's signature on a vessel may say more about why the vessel was created than about the identity of the artist.

The special abilities of the artists are elaborated by particular glyphs found in their nominal phrases. The most frequent of these is *its'at*, meaning "artista, sabio, letrado" ("artist, sage, man of letters").[30] This artistic epithet also is carried by rulers and by certain supernaturals such as the "Paddlers" (see Chapter 6) and Itzamná (God D). These deities were creator gods who were responsible for the creation of the cosmos.[31] That artists, rulers and creator deities shared the *its'at* title implies that the Classic Maya viewed artists as a direct embodiment of the power of creation—and may even have afforded them a certain degree of supernaturalness through a like-in-kind relationship with these creator deities. In addition, it underscores their importance to Maya society as individuals of tremendous authority who assumed their appurtenance through their ability to create objects of exceptional importance to the power of the Maya state and its reifying rituals.

Its'at ends artists' signature phrases on a number of outstanding vases, including MS1375 (Figure 2.30). The artist who created this exceptional object also painted two other unique vases, each painted in a different style (MS1374 and K2796; figures 2.31 and 2.32). This master painter consistently demonstrates his exquisite control of the brush, creating both delicate and bold lines on all three vases. He juxtaposes color to define and highlight images, expertly controlling the opaque slip paints to create translucent and transparent color fields. Such amazing control is achieved only by a well-practiced and

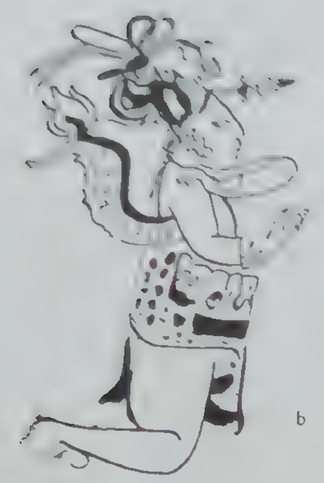
2.17

A human artist carves a mask (from MS0059)
Also see catalog 2



2.18

A sculptor carves a limestone altar. Detail from the Emiliano Zapata Tablet (drawing by Barbara MacLeod).



b

c

a

2.19

Artists' costume elements include an elaborate hairdo, the "print-out" icon emerging from under the artist's arm, and the turban-like spangled headdress (drawings by Barbara MacLeod).

a. K6020; Vase in the collection of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution (#24/4313).

b. Artist depicted on K6020.

c. Supernatural artist on MS0059.

gifted painter. In addition to his outstanding control of brush and pigment, this talented artist demonstrates masterful formal composition, especially noted in the plain but elegant composition of MS1375 and the extremely complicated yet cohesive imagery of MS1374 and K2796. The epigraphic knowledge (that is, literacy and erudition) reflected in the hieroglyphic texts on these three vases—and their detailed pictorial cosmological narratives—reflect his extensive knowledge of, and training in, Maya hieroglyphic writing, religious lore and iconography. These vases truly are the work of a master artist and savant, that is, an acknowledged *its'at*-creator.

To create such masterpieces of paint manipulation, pictorial composition, hieroglyphic writing and historical and religious knowledge, the painter must be both an exceptional artist and a highly learned person. The concept of the artist as a man of learning is explicitly stated in the artist's nominal phrase found on MS1122 (Figure 2.28c). The final two glyphs read *u-na' u-ts'ib* or "his knowledge, his painting/writing."[32] Among the Classic Maya, then, the epithet of *its'at* (artist-sage) was bestowed upon one who had mastered painting techniques and pictorial conventions. At the same time he was truly a savant, a literate person in command of Maya history, cosmology and religious knowledge. His creative abilities imbued him with exceptional power linked to that of the creator deities. His creations assisted in the maintenance and extension of the power of Maya rulers and nobility through their manipulations of these objects during important state rituals.

Who were the men of knowledge who created these masterpieces in painted ceramic? The most explicit and revealing evidence comes from the finest examples of the pictorial pottery, in which the placement of the artists' signature is dictated by more than just available pictorial space. For example, MS0651 (Figure 2.20) is an impressive artistic achievement that depicts a historical event taking place within a palace and whose participants include an enthroned ruler (an *ahaw*) and elite individuals. Although the artist could have placed his signature in any number of locations on this vase, he painted it next to the ruler and directly above the throne's backrest pillow. This intentional choice strongly suggests that the artist was making an associational statement between himself and the ruler, possibly indicating a familial connection. The same positional association with royalty is implied by the artist's signature on the "Fat Cacique" Vase; he, too, placed his name

2.20 [illegible]

[illegible] seated on the palace floor wears the turban-like [illegible] headdress [illegible]. The artist painted his [illegible] (ramonal glyphs) next to the [illegible] ruler, which implies his [illegible] with the royal lineage [illegible]

1865

2.21

An elite male figure wears the turbanlike spangled headdress also worn by scribes. (Collection of the Denver Art Museum.)

Also see catalog 13

next to the ruler even though other pictorial space was readily available (MS1418; Figure 2.29a). This artist carries the regal honorific *ahaw* title in his name.[33]

The most explicit connection of a master pottery painter with Maya royalty is stated on MS1375 (Figure 2.33).[34] The artist signs the vase, *Ah-ki-ʔ its'at Ah-Maxam* ("personal name—artist-sage—title"). He goes on to record the name of his father ("*y-une*—the three-katun *ahaw*—Lord "Flint-Face" of Naranjo"), followed by his mother ("*y-al*—Lady Yaxhá of the West").[35] There is no doubt, then, that this master painter was the son of a royal woman from Yaxhá and the contemporary ruler of Naranjo.[36] Lord "Flint-Face" (Ruler 4) is depicted on a number of stelae from the site, including Stela 19 (Figure 2.34). Interestingly, his artistically inclined son did not accede to the throne after his death. The succeeding Ruler 5 is named Lord Shield God K (*Ah-Pacal-K'awil*) and is featured on seven stelae (cf. St. 8; Figure 2.35).[37]

In some cases, then, the master pottery painters were sons of the nobility who seemingly were not in direct line for the throne. To convey these regal connections, the master artists placed their signatures on the vessels next to the depicted rulers. In a few rare instances, the artists' nominal phrases include their elite titles and royal parentage. This same situation is reported from sixteenth-century Utatlán, Guatemala: specialized artists came from within the royal lineages, were the younger sons and other close relatives of the lords who held the highest sociopolitical offices, and were not in direct line to inherit the throne.[38]

Ethnohistoric data from both the Maya regions and from highland Mexico provide supporting evidence for the association of Maya artists and savants with the elite

2.22

Monkey-men supernatural artists (drawings by Barbara MacLeod).

a. From the Palenque Palace Tablet.

b. From a polychrome vase (in Coe, 1978).

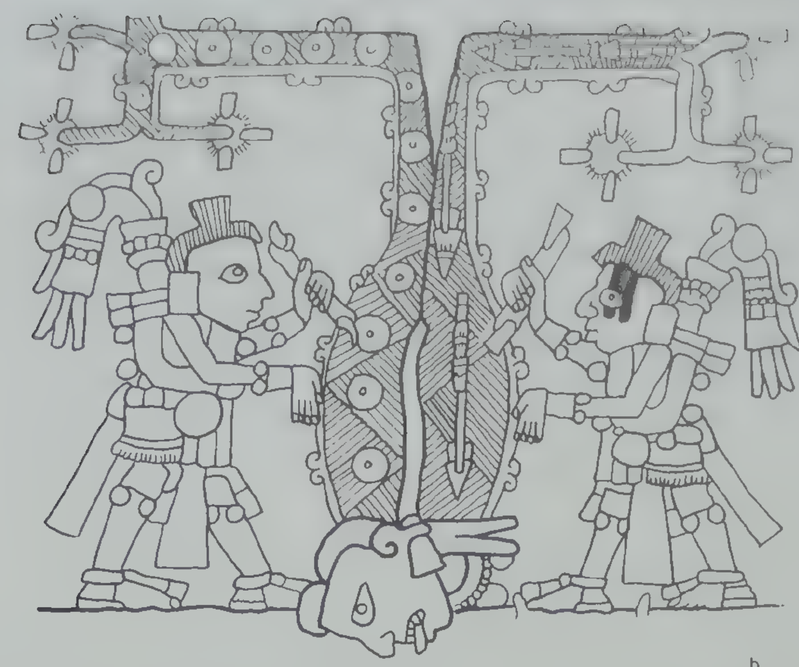
2.23

Deities depicted carving masks in the Madrid Codex (drawings by Barbara MacLeod).

a. God E carving a mask using a bone awl (p. 99d).

b. God D carving a mask using a hafted axe (p. 97b).

a



b

2.24

Maya and Mixtec sculptors (drawings by Barbara MacLeod).

a God E carving a mask using a hafted axe (Madrid Codex, p. 97d).

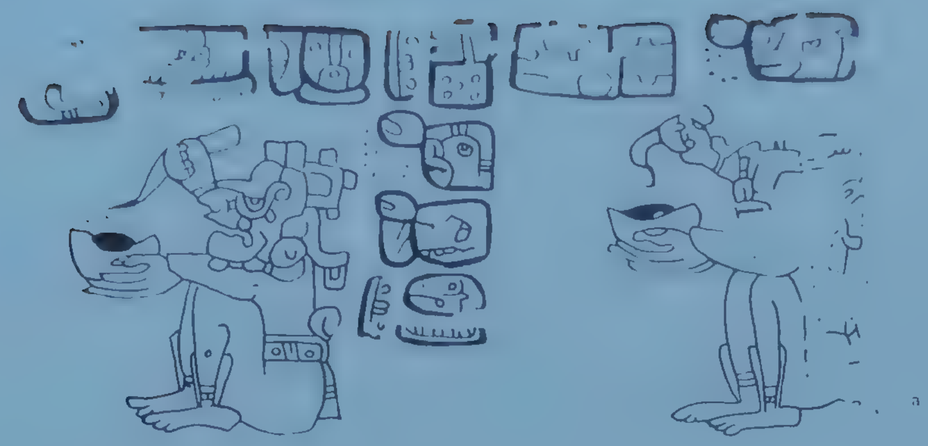
b Supernatural sculptors cutting open the Tree of Origin of the Mixtec people (Codex Vindobonensis, p. 37).

strata of pre-Columbian society. Diego de Landa, the first bishop of Yucatan in the sixteenth century, notes that the Maya priests instructed the second sons of the lords in the ". . . sciences as well as in writing books."[39] Landa goes on to describe these teachings: "The sciences which they taught were the computations of the years, months and days, the festivals and ceremonies, the administration of the sacraments, the fateful days and seasons, their methods of divination and their prophecies, events and the cures for diseases, and their antiquities and how to read and write with the letters and characters, with which they wrote, and drawings which illustrate the meaning of the writings."[40] Here Landa explicitly connects the teaching of scientific knowledge with the art of representation in both hieroglyphic writing and pictorial images. He makes repeated references to the Maya lords being well educated—in many cases they were both rulers and priests. The Motul Maya dictionary, compiled from sixteenth-century manuscripts, defines the lordly title *halach uinic* as "obispo" (bishop) and "gobernador" (ruler).[41] Ralph Roys notes that the knowledge of hieroglyphic writing was confined to the priesthood (the *ah camsah* or "teacher-priest") and to some of the nobility.[42] He bases this assessment on early colonial documents, such as the *Relaciones de Yucatan*, which state that "—they did not teach [their letters] to any except noble persons; and for this reason all the priests, who were those most concerned with them, were persons of rank."[43]

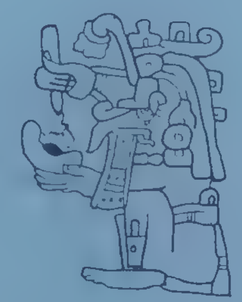
Looking back at the Classic Period, we find this same pattern; the nobility were the learned individuals who were schooled in hieroglyphic writing. In addition to the pictorial and hieroglyphic examples discussed above, the same correlation is implied by a scene painted on a dish excavated at Tonina. Here two elite men are engaged in a specialized ritual wherein one of the men reads from a codex. His elite and royal status is expressed by the large jaguar-skin cushion behind him, which was an integral component of Classic Period royal thrones.[44] A recently excavated vase from the site of Nakbé, Guatemala, underscores this image from Tonina (Figure 2.36). The Nakbe vase is painted with the image of two seated scribal painters whose jadeite jewelry and *ahaw* ("lord") glyph over their heads point to their elite status. The rim text ends with the standard nominal phrase naming the elite patron/owner of the vase, whose nominals here include the *its'at* "artist/sage" title. These data from Tonina and Nakbe recall *Hasaw Ka'an K'awil* of Tikal whose tomb offerings include a shell-shaped ceramic paint container (Figure 2.10), implying that he was

[illegible] As at Tikal, an [illegible] Structure [illegible] at [illegible] sumptuous offer[illegible] pottery vessels, carved [illegible] jewelry, a desiccated codex and [illegible]. Together, these identify the bur[illegible] scribe, and the high-status con[illegible] person being a member of the elite [illegible] society.[illegible] The placement of this tomb [illegible] located in the elite center of Copán, [illegible] suggests his familial affiliation with the ruler [illegible] this building (either the twelfth [illegible] or his successor *Waxaklahun-*[illegible] 18-Rabbit).[46]

[illegible] times to the present day in Yucatan, [illegible] literacy and the command of sacred [illegible] history has remained in the control [illegible] class of priest-secretaries. The pre-[illegible] elite teacher (*ah camsah*) was [illegible] the Spanish term *escribano*, or [illegible]. During the nineteenth-century Caste Wars [illegible] *escribano* was the official voice of the [illegible] Talking Cross—signing documents in God's [illegible]. This professional office of *escribano* became [illegible] and when the power of the cult of the Talk-[illegible] waned, the *escribano* dedicated himself more [illegible] affairs and knowledge. As a professional [illegible] scribe, he was treated as a holy person.[47] In [illegible], then, the early colonial native office of *escri-*[illegible] reverted to its pre-Columbian elite office of the [illegible] teacher-priest, whose responsibility it was [illegible] transmit to the next generation the sacred art of



a



b.

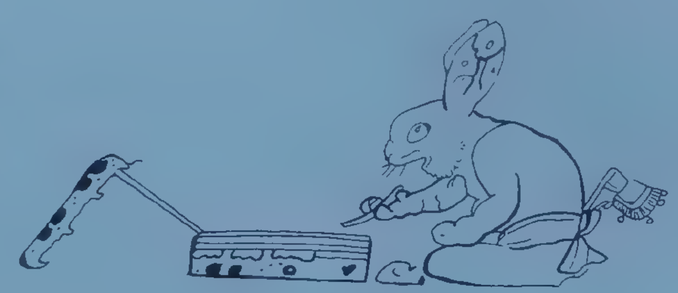
2.25

Deities depicted painting in the Madrid Codex (drawings by Barbara MacLeod).

a. God D and God C holding paint container and brush (p. 23c). The hieroglyphic text begins with *u ts'ib God C*, "his painting God C."

b. God B holding paint container and brush (p. 73d).

a.



b.

2.26

Zoomorphic supernaturals depicted in artistic roles (drawings by Barbara MacLeod).

a. Vulture-headed artist on MS0173.

b. Rabbit scribe on MS1404. *Also see catalog 89.*

a

c.

2.27

Ah-ts'ib + nominal glyphs (drawings by Barbara MacLeod).

a. K791.

b. K6020 (From the collection of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution (#24/4313).

c. Drawing of artist and *ah-ts'ib* nominal on K6020.

b.

literacy, the religious knowledge and the history of the Maya people.

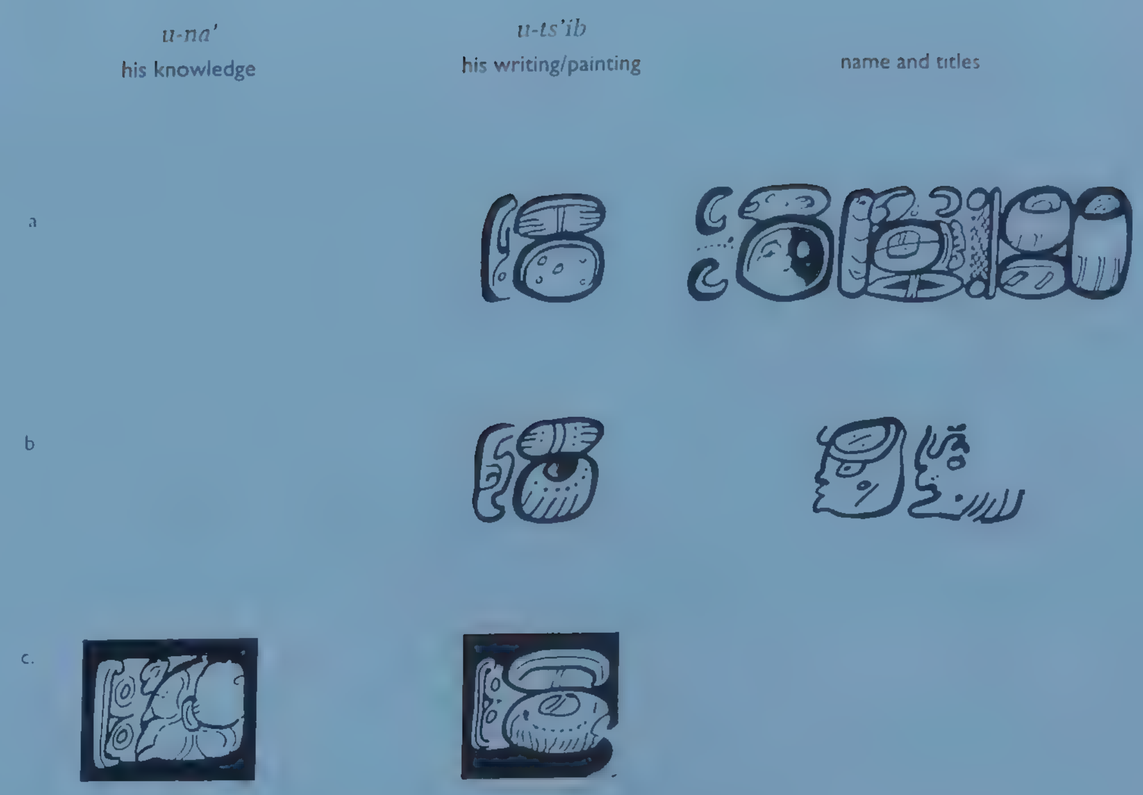
Another example of educated artists who were members of the elite lineages is found at the highland Guatemalan site of Utatlán. Early colonial documents clearly state that, in addition to common craftsmen, there were specialized artisans within the lordly lineages. Although they lack the *ahaw* lordly title, they appear to have been the younger sons and relatives of the lords of high office.[48] Also from these lordly lineages of pre-Columbian Utatlán (renamed Quiché by the sixteenth-century Spaniards) came the learned men who recorded in European alphabetic script the pre-Columbian epic *Popol Vuh*.[49] Anthropologist Dennis Tedlock speculates that this sixteenth-century manuscript originally included pictorial images because the authors occasionally appear to be describing pictures.[50] It would seem, then, that these early colonial Mayan authors continued the pre-Columbian tradition

of combining pictorial elements with written texts, and it strongly suggests that the Maya authors of the *Popol Vuh* were learned men from the elite lineages, or *ah ts'ib* ("artist/scribe"), in the fullest pre-Columbian sense.[51]

This same phenomenon is found in highland Mexico among both the Aztecs and the Mixtecs. Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, one of the primary sixteenth-century sources of cultural information about the Aztecs, discusses the *tlacuilo*, or "scribe/painter," providing details of this learned individual's roles and personal attributes: "The scribe: writings, ink [are] his special skills. [He is] a craftsman, an artist . . . a painter who dissolves colors, grinds pigments, uses colors. The good scribe is honest, circumspect, far-sighted, pensive; a judge of colors, an applier of the colors . . . creates works of art. The bad scribe [is] dull, detestable, irritating—a fraud, a cheat. He paints without luster, ruins colors, blurs them, paints askew—acts impetuously, hastily, without reflection."[52] Among the Aztecs, then, the scribe is an artist, a virtuous and knowledgeable person who is creative as well as in command of the paint medium.

Following Tedlock's suggestion that pictorial illustrations accompanied the alphabetic text of the *Popol Vuh*, Sahagún's informants also provided him with both. Sahagún states that the Tepepulco elders who replied to his questioning did so "in pictures" because "that was the writing they employed in ancient times."[53] He goes on to say that his younger Aztec informants elaborated upon these pictorial and logographic records by "writing the explanations [using European script] at the bottom of the painting."[54] In pre-Columbian times, however, painted pictures were the mode of recording. Thus the Aztec *tlacuilo* ("scribe") is the same as the Maya *ah ts'ib*; both were "artist/scribes." Interestingly, Sahagún's writings chart the rapid change from the Aztec recording system, wherein writing and painting were one and the same, to the European system, which makes a formal separation between the two modes.

The Aztec *tlacuiloque* (the plural of *tlacuilo*) were educated in the *calmécac*, a school of higher learning for the children of nobles and future priests.[55] The *calmécac* provided instruction in Aztec history and



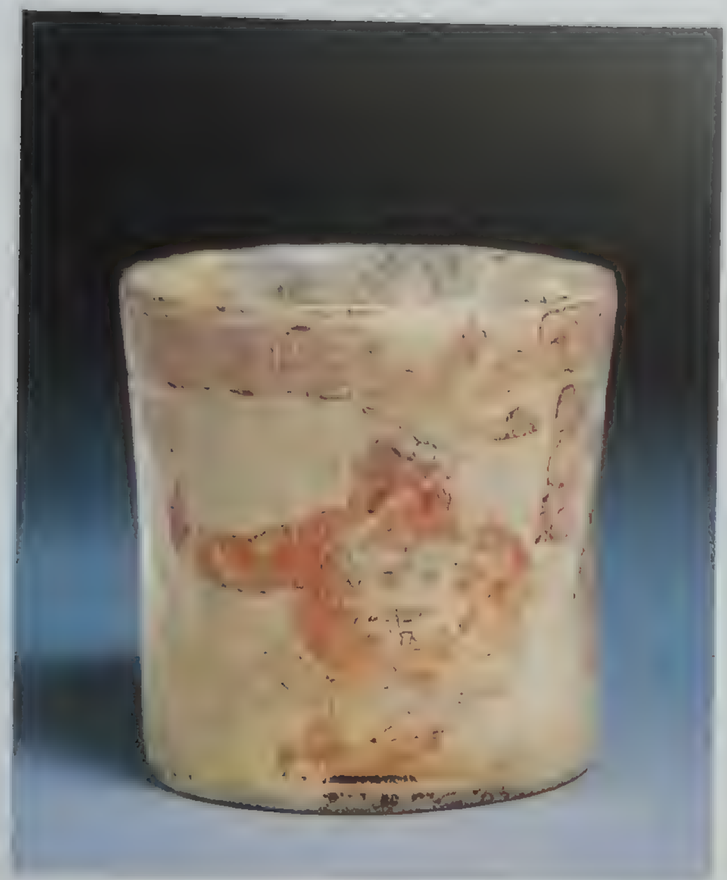
2.28

U-na' u-ts'ib + nominal glyphs (drawings by Barbara MacLeod and D. Reents-Budet).

a. MS1375. *Also see catalog 10*

b. MS0651. *Also see catalog 12*

c. MS1122.



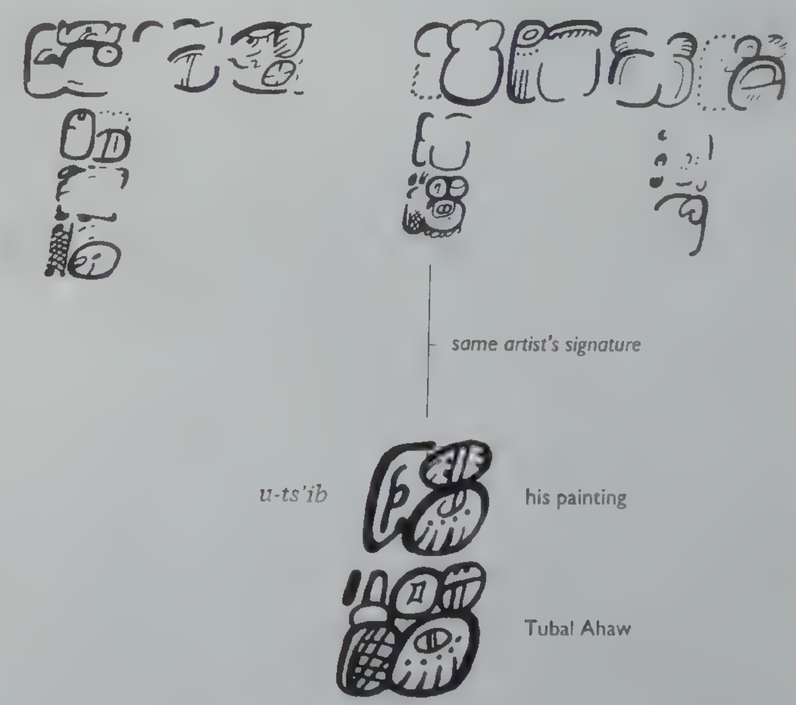
a.

2.29

a. MS1418. The artist placed his signature next to the seated ruler, implying his connection with the depicted royalty.

b. The artist's signature as found on MS1418 and LC-cb2-462, another vase by the same painter (drawings by D. Reents-Budet).

b.



traditions, the calendrical mathematical systems, astronomy, astrology, sacred songs, rhetoric and how to read and interpret the codices. A *calmécac* education also included instruction in the arts and the acquisition of technical skills in the various mediums.[56] Fray Sahagún discusses artistic specialization among the *calmécacs*, noting that the Tenochtitlán barrio of Yopico was occupied by goldsmiths and their workshops, and the Yopico *calmécac* probably trained students in metallurgy.[57] It is safe to assume that other *calmécacs* specialized in teaching the scribal arts and the creation of the painted books. This instruction also would include the kinds of knowledge recorded in the books, such as history, religious mythology and ritual traditions, astrology and calendrics. As such, the manuscript painters' education and intellectual pursuits must have overlapped with those of the *tlamatinime*, who were the Aztec philosophers carrying on the study of the ancient religious thinking passed down from the Toltecs and earlier cultures. The *tlamatinime* are described as those who "carried with them the black and red ink, the manuscripts and the pictures, wisdom . . ."[58] The *tlacuilo* was a highly educated person, most likely from the higher ranks of Aztec society, who acquired his intellectual and artistic training in the *calmécac*. He was schooled by priests and probably worked and studied closely with the *tlamatinime*, who also came from the upper ranks of Aztec society.

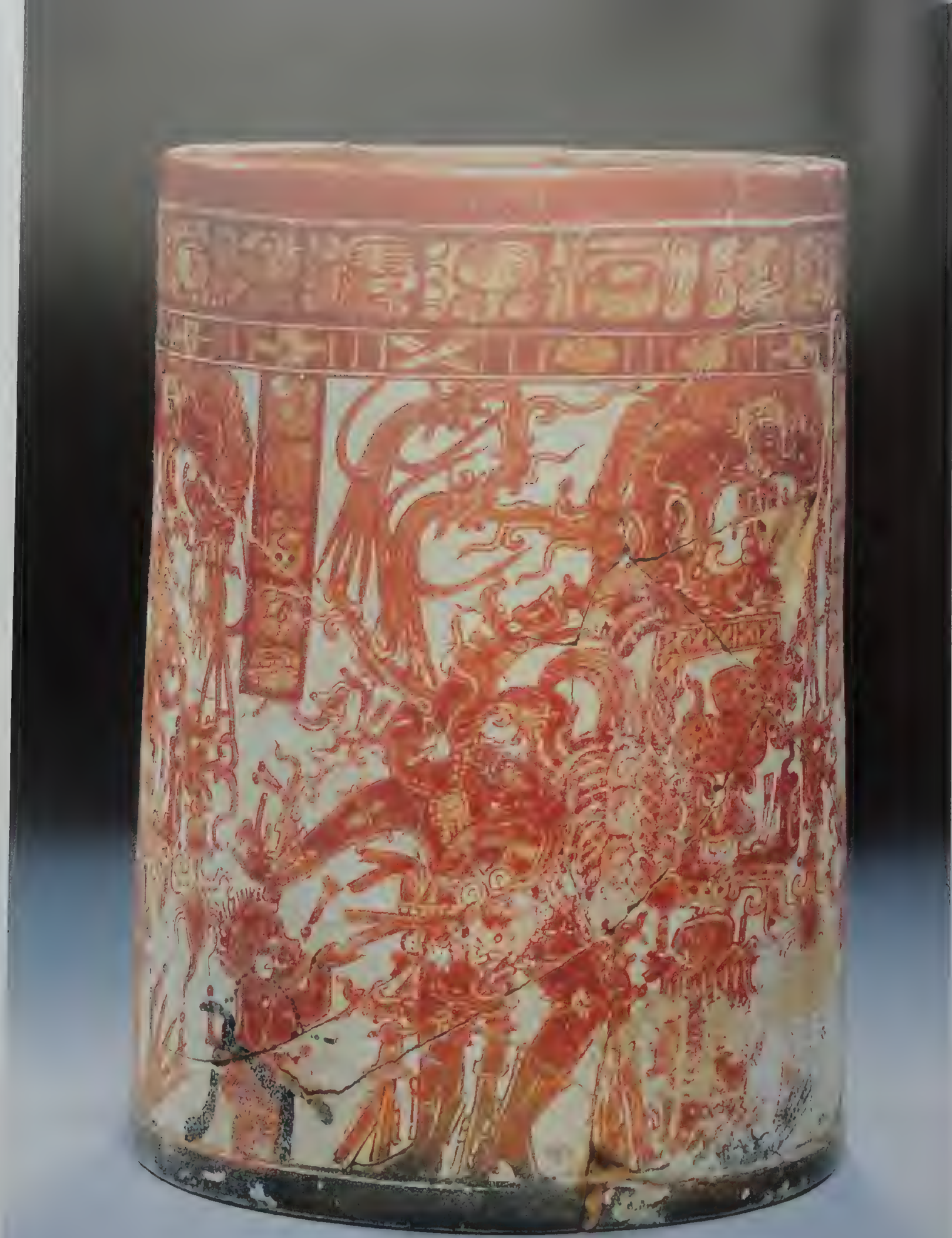
Aztec artists were organized into guilds, and they produced for a wide range of Aztec society. The nonaristocratic craftsmen produced large numbers of objects for the common people, and these wares were distributed by merchants in the markets. As noted above, the cre-

2.30 MS1375

One of three outstanding vases painted by *Ah-Maxam*, a royal artist from Naranjo. *Also see catalog 10.*

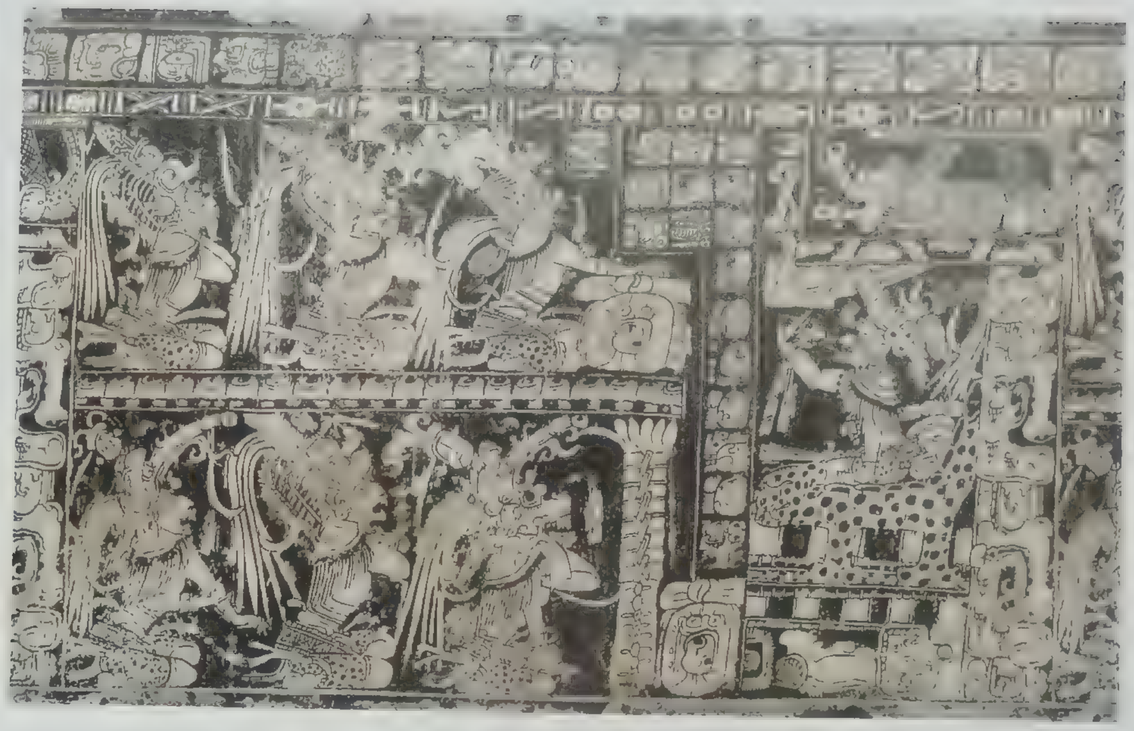
2.31 MS1374

One of three exceptional vases painted by *Ah Maxam*, a royal artist from Naranjo.
Also see catalog 9



ators of the painted manuscripts were highly educated members of the upper classes, and their creations were restricted to use by the nobility and priests. As among the Maya, these Aztec artists probably were younger sons of the nobility who were not in direct line of inheritance for office and wealth. They resided in the elite palace compounds, working in the royal workshops and creating objects for palace and ceremonial use or for distribution as elite ritual gifts.[59]

Although the Aztecs believed that artists were born and not made through education, social values required that its nobility be well schooled in the arts because, without this training and knowledge, the Aztecs believed their rulers could not be truly wise.[60] Fray Sahagún's informants provide a composite view of the ideal nobleman: he is a student, teachable, indoctrinated, inquisitive, well taught, well instructed and an



2.32

The Vase of the Seven Gods, K2796. This black background vessel is one of three magnificent vases painted by *Ah-Maxam*, a royal artist from Naranjo. *Also see catalog 11.*

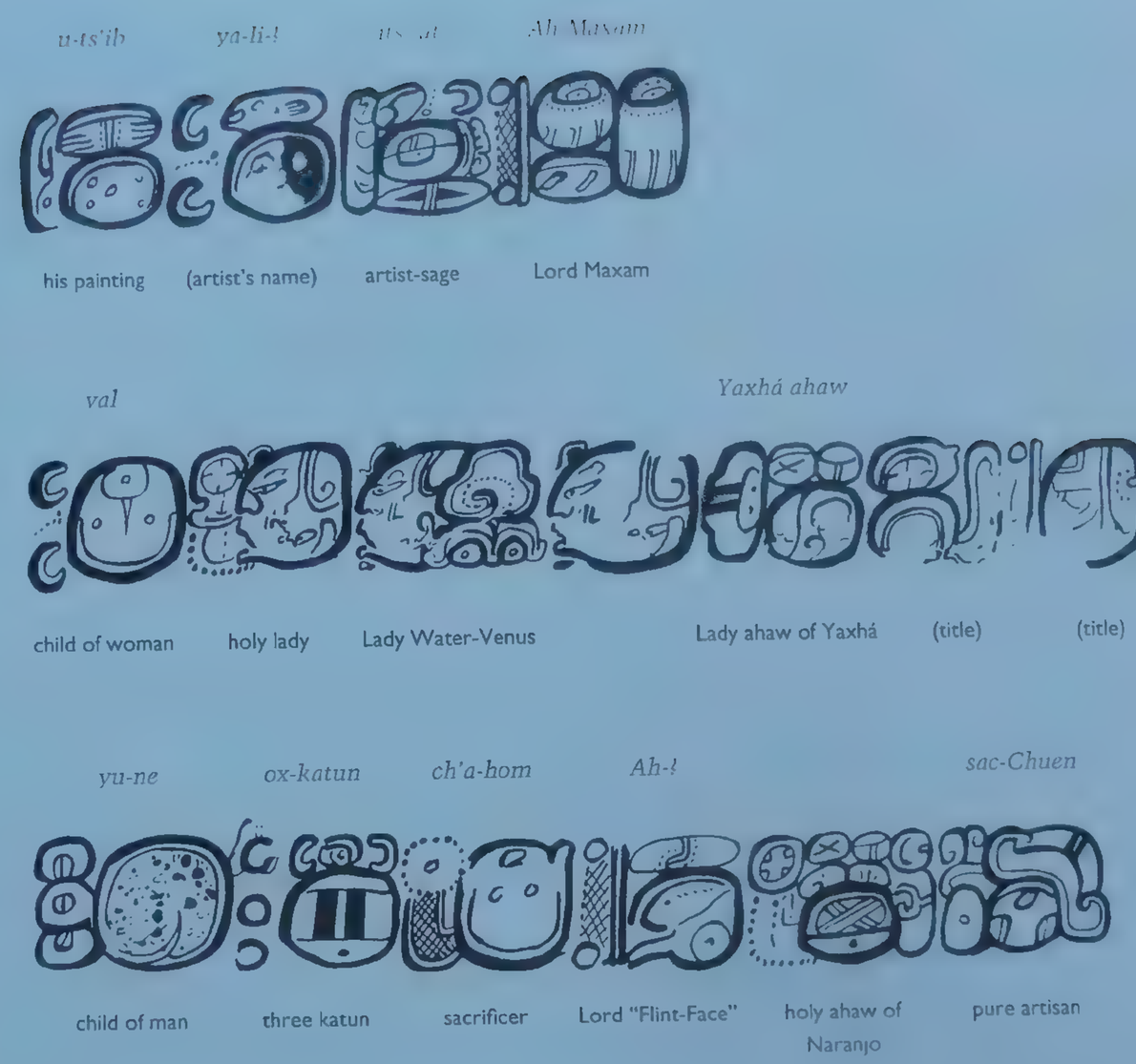
enlightener.[61] And members of high society pursued the arts even if they were not destined to become vocational artists: "In times of recreation the nobles pursued learning various arts and crafts, such as painting or the carving of wood and stone, in this way decorating their valuable stones and other objects with forms and figures resembling animals, birds, or reptiles. In this way, the value which these objects had was not so much for their utility nor for their natural properties, but rather for their fine colors and rarity. Some nobles dedicated themselves to being sculptors in stone and wood, and others studied the planets and celestial bodies, by which they were able to predict certain events in the future. Through their writing, it is known that they could understand many secrets of nature."[62] Among the Aztecs, then, the arts were an integral part of elite life. The sons of the nobility, especially those who were not in direct line to inherit an office, could pursue an artistic career, creating objects for use by the nobility. From this privileged and educated group came the men of knowledge who were the *tlacuiloque*, among whom were the artist/scribes who painted the pictorial manuscripts.

The pre-Columbian Mixtec of Oaxaca also created finely painted manuscripts whose subject matter focused on royal genealogy and regional history. These manuscripts were created by painters who, like their counterparts among the Aztecs, came from the elite lineages of Mixtec society. Their rigorous training took many years in order to master both painting techniques and the specialized historical, calendrical and ritual knowledge needed to create these books.[63]

A composite picture emerges among the pre-Columbian peoples of highland Mexico wherein the artist/scribes came from the upper levels of society. They were well trained in the mechanics of their chosen medium. They learned to grind pigments and mix the paints, and probably also had knowledge of the lengthy process of making the paper or preparing the deer skins that were the base material for the manuscripts. These artists also were accomplished painters whose finely executed images are witness to years of practice. The artist/scribes also were highly educated in the intellectual subjects found in the books, including mathematics and calendrics, mythology and cosmology, religious and social ritual and history.

Similarly, among the post-Classic Maya of Yucatan, the artist/scribe (the *ah ts'ib*) was a member of the elite stratum of Maya society. He was highly educated in the multiplicity of subjects preserved in the pre-Columbian manuscripts, including mathematics, astronomy, astrology, cosmology and human history. And, as with their contemporaries in highland Mexico, the Maya nobility participated in intellectual and artistic pursuits even though they were not following an artistic career as a full-time occupation.

Looking back eight hundred years to the Classic Period and relying upon the painted pottery and carved monuments as the primary sources for identifying the artist, we find little change from the pattern found in the post-Classic Period. Master painters and sculptors were members of the elite stratum and many were the offspring of the nobility who were not in direct line to inherit offices. These artistically inclined individuals were organized into elite workshops, some of which were physically connected to royal residential compounds. These master artists created objets d'art for use by the nobility in both public and private arenas.



2.33

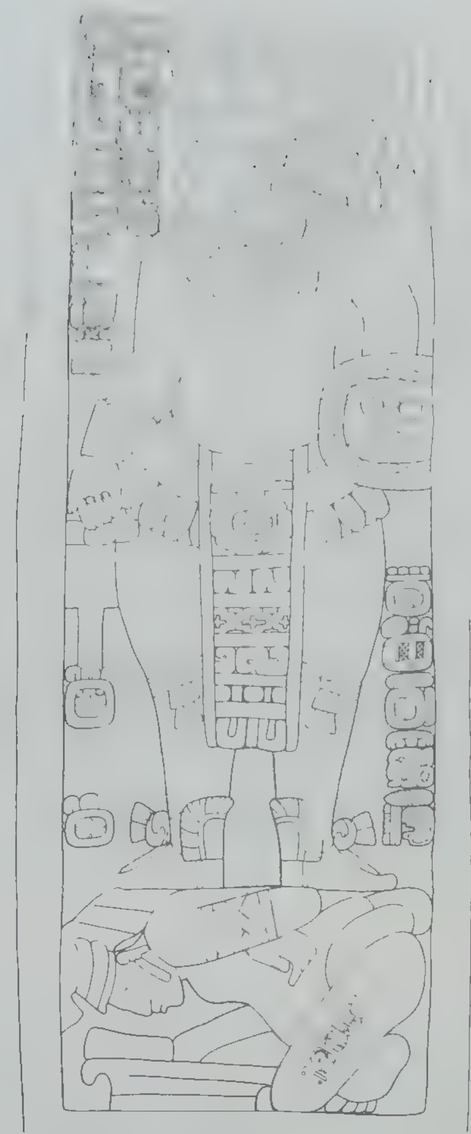
The nominal phrases on MS1375 include the signature of the painter and his artist/sage title (*its'at*), and end with the names of his royal parents (drawing by Barbara MacLeod). *Also see catalog 10.*

2.34

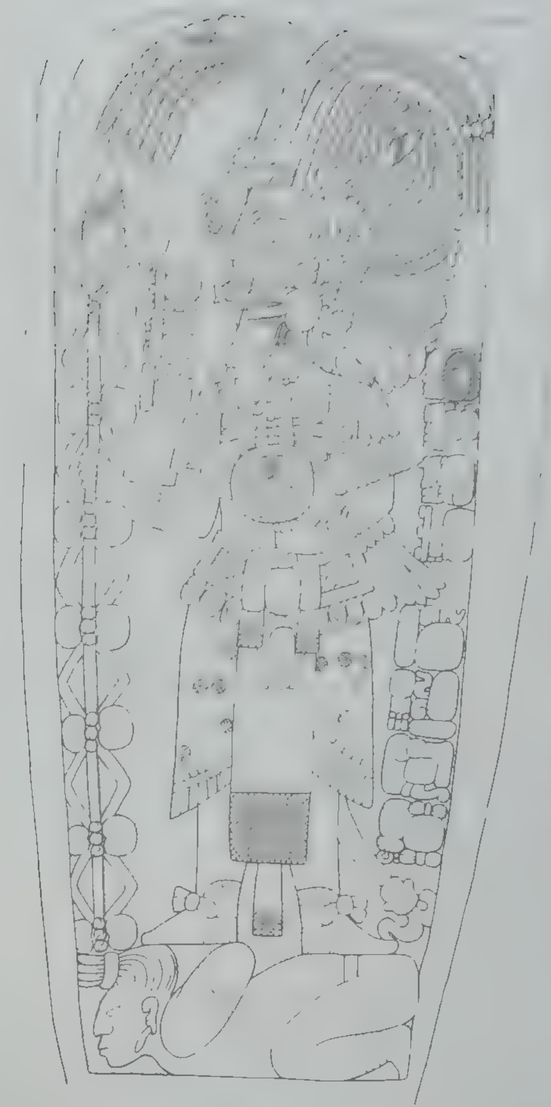
Naranjo Stela 19 depicting Ruler 4, Lord "Flint-Face" (drawing by Ian Graham, courtesy Peabody Museum, Harvard University).

2.35

Naranjo Stela 8 depicting Ruler 5, Lord Shield God K (drawing by Ian Graham, courtesy Peabody Museum, Harvard University).



Lord "Flint-Face"



Lord Shield God K (Lord Pacal Kawil)

Early colonial documents from the Maya region and from highland Mexico make a clear distinction between the master artist class and common craftspeople. The craftspeople made objects for the lower strata of their respective societies and were represented by such objects as the thousands of ceramic figurines, the shell and ceramic beads, and the simpler decorated pottery. Among the Classic Maya, one only has to notice the wide variation in painting quality of the thousands of extant polychrome pottery vessels to see that the same kind of artistic differentiation and consumer classes existed during the first millennium A.D. For every masterpiece of painted ceramic, there exist hundreds of painted vessels with simplistically and/or poorly executed imagery, most of which lack readable (i.e., functional) hieroglyphic texts. The archaeological remains of this lower level of ceramic production frequently are found in the refuse of commoners' households. These are the works of the pottery craftspeople who were making painted ceramics for the lower-tier elite and nonelite members of Classic Maya society.

2.36

Codex-style vase MSNXOI painted with the image of an artist/scribe (drawing by J. Hansen).

In contrast, the Classic Period elite pottery painters were special individuals whose creative abilities afforded them unusual authority that recalled those of the creator deities. They belonged to a separate class of craftspeople within Maya society, a class intertwined with the sociopolitical power structure of their respective locales because these artists created the requisite and extraordinary objects used during the rituals that reified and maintained the Classic Period rulership and its underlying ideologies. The artists were imbued with both the practical and mystical aspects of Maya hieroglyphic writing and pictorial representation of the most fundamental and profound intellectual beliefs of their culture. They also were well trained in the highly specialized pottery production techniques whose mastery required years of apprenticeship. These painters' impressive artistic and intellectual abilities are the foundation of their material creations, which rightly stand alongside all masterpieces of painting worldwide.

Notes

1. Michael Coe (1977) has written an excellent introduction to Classic Maya artists and their supernatural patrons.

2. See Merwin and Vaillant (1932: 28–29, Plate 34f) for a discussion and illustration of the artifacts found in this tomb. In addition to the halved-shell paint container, the authors found a "cupped stone" in this assemblage, which, because of its context, could be interpreted as a pigment grinding and/or mixing container used in the final stage of creating paint. This halved-shell paint pot is now on exhibit at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University.

Takeshi Inomata and Laura Stiver excavated an elite residential/administrative compound at Aguateca, Guatemala. They uncovered a three-room stone structure that may have been a formal meeting or administrative building. One of the rooms contained two halved-shell paint containers, small stone grinding containers and pummel stones, all clearly the tools of the scribe. The archaeologists also found miniature ceramic jars, one of which held red pigment (Inomata and Stiver interpret this latter one as possibly containing pigment for face painting based on the context in which they found it). The room with the scribes' tools also contained elite items of personal adornment, underscoring the high status of the building, its occupants and the activities that took place here. Inomata and Stiver reported these finds in their paper "Investigaciones Arqueológicas en Aguateca: Temporada de 1993" presented at the Séptimo Simposio de Arquelogía Guatemalteca, Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología, Guatemala (July 19–23, 1993). This research is being conducted as part of the Proyecto Regional Arqueológico Petexbatún, directed by Arthur Demarest (Vanderbilt University), and Juan Antonio Valdés (Instituto de Antropología e Historia, Guatemala).

3. *Hasaw Ka'an K'awil* is the Classic Period name of the Late Classic Tikal ruler previously known as Ruler A, based on the recent decipherment of his name glyphs. See Culbert (1993) for a discussion of the pottery from this tomb found inside Temple 1 at Tikal.

4. Barbara MacLeod discovered the critical logosyllabic value of the prefix T174 as *cuch* that led to her decipherment of the glyph painted on this vase. MacLeod also has found the title *ah-cuch* ("cargo-holder") in Yucatec, which could have been a Classic Period title applied to scribes, based on T174 and a halved conch shell comprising the name of a sculptor at Piedras Negras (on Stela 12 and Lintel 3, both carved during the reign of Ruler 7). Kris Villela assisted with the T174 research, and discussions with Nikolai Grube, Simon Martin and Dorie Reents-Budet assisted in the decipherment of this glyph. See Barrera Vásquez (1991:215–16) for the Yucatec dictionary entries.

A second paint container made from pottery and sculpted in the form of the halved conch shell is found in the collection of confiscated looted pottery at the Instituto de Antropología e Historia, Guatemala City (Smithsonian Institution chemical sample reference number MSM308). This shell-shaped pottery vessel is painted with a PSS text that does not contain a "vase" word but instead jumps from the "writing" statement to a long nominal phrase naming the owner of this vessel. Preliminary analysis of the vessel's chemical profile points to the general Seibal (Ceibal) region as a possible location of the workshop in which this paint container was made.

5. See Schele and Miller (1986:151, Plate 46) for a discussion of this sculpture and Fash (1991) for a thorough account of the excavation of this sculpture and its architectural context.

6. Quotation from Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Apologética historia* (1909 [1527–1550]), after Keen (1990:94–95).

7. Containers made from ceramic were used by the Classic Maya artists to hold ground pigments. For example, the elite scribe's tomb (Burial XXXVII–4) at Copán included ten small, plain, cylindrically shaped pots, each filled with ground mineral colorants (after Fash 1991:106–11). Small containers of pigment are known from numerous archaeological contexts as well as from museum collections, including a low dish from the Motagua River Valley filled with ground hematite in the collection of the Duke University Museum of Art (#1070.50.1). Further, the tiny ceramic jars, called "poison bottles" in the literature, in fact may have been containers for ground pigment. Although few of these have been found archaeologically, miniature vessels were excavated at Uaxactun and Aguateca. R. E. Smith identifies some of the Uaxactun jar forms as paint (pigment) containers because a few of the Early Classic ones had red paint adhering to their interior surfaces (Uaxactun vol. 1: 103). He notes that of the two Late Classic miniature jars, one was filled with copal incense and the other showed no evidence of having held pigment or incense (pp. 89, 104). Also see Note 2 for other miniature pigment jars recently excavated at Aguateca, Guatemala.

[illegible] suggests a clear distinction among the Maya elite, proposing that the Maya elite consisted of a ruling class and a scribal class having close social links. Membership in both classes was hereditary, but children in the ruling class could be educated as scribes, and children of the scribes could attain political office. Although it is highly probable that such a division did exist and that the scribal tradition moved from generation to generation within the family unit, evidence from the Classic Period also points to the scribal and painting arts as an integral part of the lives and pursuits of Maya rulers and members of their immediate families.

47. See Reed (1976:312).

48. See Carmack (1977:9).

49. After D. Tedlock (1985:28).

50. These pictures have not survived, probably because they were not copied by the friar Francisco Ximénez (between A.D. 1701–3), whose manuscript is the only surviving copy of the original Quiché text (D. Tedlock, 1985:30).

51. After D. Tedlock (1985:30).

52. Sahagún (1974–82:10:28).

53. Sahagún (1974–82:Introductions and Indices:54).

54. Sahagún (1974–82:1:54).

55. See Burr Brundage (1972:165) and Miguel León-Portilla (1978:137). For a dissenting view, see Edward Calnek (1988). Calnek's thesis, based on scrupulous analyses of sixteenth-century manuscripts, suggests that the *calmecac* was open to all Aztec youths regardless of social rank. León-Portilla (1962:xxvii) mentions that there is evidence that children of low social status sometimes were admitted to the *calmécac* if they showed exceptional aptitude in learning and the arts.

56. See Edward Calnek (1988:172).

57. See Sahagun (1974–82:9:69), Calnek (1988:172).

58. Codice Matritense de la Real Academia 8, fol. 192,r; cited in Leon-Portilla (1978:23).

59. After Pasztory (1985:91).

60. After León-Portilla (1978:169).

61. Sahagun (1974–82:10:15-22).

62. Bautista de Pomar (1975:41). Doris Stone (personal communication) brought to my attention a similar pattern of artistic pursuits on the part of the elite in southeastern Costa Rica. She found mention in early ethnohistoric documents of a local *cacique* (ruler) who was renowned for his metalworking skills.

63. After Monaghan (1990:133).

do not represent language, as does Maya hieroglyphic script.

25. The observation that these two vases were painted by the same artist has been made independently by a number of scholars, including Nicholas Hellmuth (1977), Barbara and Justin Kerr (n.d.), David Stuart (1987), Kevin Johnston, and Reents-Budet and Bishop (n.d.b).

26. See Michael Closs (1992) for a discussion of this female scribe glyph and the pottery vessel's entire Primary Standard Sequence. This bowl is reproduced by Justin Kerr (1989:46). See Prudence Rice (1991) and Elizabeth Graham (1991) for further discussions of gender issues and pre-Columbian Maya pottery production.

27. Only a few of the carved stone monuments include the signatures of the sculptors who created them. Among the best known of these signed sculptures are the lintels of Structures 44 and 23 at Yaxchilán (Tate, 1992:47), Stela 12 and the carved throne at Piedras Negras, the lintels from Las Monjas at Chichén Itzá (Ruth Krochock, personal communication), and Pacal's Sarcophagus Lid and a movable stone sculpture, both from Palenque (Schele, 1992:185).

Nikolai Grube (1990:328) has identified the same artist's signature on a pottery vessel carved in the Chocholá style and on a carved stone monument from Xkalumkin, Yucatan. To my knowledge, this is the only example yet to be found of a Classic Period artist signing works executed in two media. It should be noted that the primary method of creating these objects' imagery is carving, and therefore we have the signature of a sculptor working in two media rather than a sculptor also being a painter.

28. D. Tedlock (1985:124).

29. A historical parallel is found in fifteenth-century Italy. Medallions made of precious metals were commissioned by the royalty and were used as gifts to members of the court or to "foreign" regional powers. These medallions then were displayed as visible representations of royal favor and political alliance. Similar to the Maya elite pottery, these medallions' imagery featured a portrait of the ruler and an emblem pertaining to his position, such as his family's coat of arms. The most striking similarity between these fifteenth-century Italian royal medallions and the elite Maya pottery is that both were among the few art works of their times signed by the artists. The signing of art works in Italy became somewhat more common in the sixteenth century, but again, many of these were art works created specifically as elite gifts (John Spencer, 1992:personal communication).

30. *Its'at* was first deciphered by David Stuart (1987:1-11). See Barrera Vasquez (1980:273) for the Yucatec dictionary entries.

31. For example, Barbara MacLeod (1993:personal communication) cites the hieroglyphic record of creation found on Quiriguá Stela C. Here on *4 Ahaw 8 Cumku* (the Calendar Round date for the beginning of the present era), the Paddlers set up a jaguar throne in the sky, the snaggle-toothed supernatural sets up a throne on the earth, and Itzamná creates a waterlily throne in the underworld.

32. Barbara MacLeod (1991:personal communication).

33. Steven Houston (1993:120) discusses the sculptors whose names are found on the stelae at Dos Pilas, Seibal (Ceibal) and Aguateca. He notes the high status of one of the sculptors of Aguateca Stela 7, whose name includes the *ahaw* royal title.

34. David Stuart (1985:7-8) was the first epigrapher to discuss in print the parentage phrases on this vase and their connection to the artist. Also see Reents (1987).

35. See Stuart (1985).

36. Although rarely found in the stone inscriptions, at least one example is known of an artist's name being followed by the name of his father, who is a known ruler. Stela 63 from Copán records the artist's name (*its'at ahaw Popol Hol K'inich*, or "artist lord *Popol Hol K'inich*"), followed by the same parentage glyph *y-une* as seen on MS1375. This is succeeded by the name of his father, Lord *Yax K'uk Mo K'inich*, who founded the Copán dynasty and ruled the site during the early fifth century A.D. (Fash, 1991:81–83).

37. Both the artist and Ruler 5 share the title *Ah-Maxam*, first identified by David Stuart (1987). It is now believed that this is a toponym referring to a specific sector or place at Naranjo. If true, the sharing of this titular toponym by these two men strengthens their identity as siblings.

38. See Wallace and Carmack (1977:9) for a discussion of the regal connections of artists and craftspeople among the sixteenth-century Maya of Utatlán.

39. Tozzer (1941:27).

40. Ibid., pp. 27–28.

41. Martínez-Hernández (1926).

42. Roys (1972:87).

43. *Relaciones de Yucatán* 1:52, cited in Roys (1972:82).

44. See Becquelin and Baudez (1984:Fig. 181).

45. See Fash (1991:104–11).

46. William Fash (1991:111) suggests this royal artist/scribe was a second son of the Copán ruler. However, Michael

3.1 MS0647 and MS0648

These two Codex-style vessels were created as a set. They were painted by the same artist, and the equivalent chemical profiles of their respective ceramic pastes demonstrate that they were made from the same batch of clay and temper mixture. The patron/owner of these two vessels is referred to by a title that implies his deceased status, hence these vessels probably were funerary wares. *Also see catalog 20 and 21*

3. Functions of Classic Period Painted Pottery

Human beings must eat to survive, and the cooking, storage and serving of foods is greatly facilitated and enhanced through the use of containers. The first containers used by humans were natural objects such as rocks and bottle gourds whose shapes were readily applicable to food storage, processing and serving. Along the evolutionary path of the "found container" came the discovery of pottery, and ceramic vessels became the consummate food storage, cooking and serving wares. In short, pottery has been a preeminent utilitarian container for food throughout human history.

Pottery is an advantageous material for the storage and cooking of food because it is easy and cheap to produce. Pottery vessels can be made relatively air- and animal-tight, and a properly made ceramic cooking pot readily and evenly transfers heat without destroying the vessel itself. In addition, pottery clay is extremely malleable. It can be shaped into nearly endless varieties of forms that have equally varied functions, and pottery can be decorated with a multiplicity of techniques, both manipulative and additive. This malleability lends to pottery an elasticity of function and decorative possibilities that humans have exploited throughout time. One of the intriguing questions concerning pottery and human cultures is why, in some cultures, utilitarian pottery objects move from general usage to become highly specialized objects with culturally proscribed uses? For example, what caused the ancient Sumerians to transform clay containers into a writing system? Why do some pottery service vessels move from the realm of the kitchen to become elegantly embellished objects with socially restricted uses? In the case of the Maya, why did some pre-Classic Maya monochrome painted pottery evolve into a highly complex polychrome ceramic tradition functioning within the elite political, economic and ritual spheres during the subsequent Classic Period? What cultural forces lie behind these changes, and what can these tell us about the society from which these specialized pottery vessels come?

During the Early Classic Period (A.D. 250–550), the tradition of polychrome pottery was developing out of the more common monochrome painted utilitarian ceramic serving vessels.[1] By the Late Classic Period (A.D. 550–850), this pottery was transformed into a prime medium on whose surfaces were created great paintings. These paintings on ceramic represent many different artistic styles and record detailed images of Maya history and religion. The accompanying hieroglyphic texts dedicate and bless the vessel and the act of painting the vessel. The texts record the vessel's con

[illegible] that these vessels were funerary wares that [illegible] and other offerings for the deceased.[4] Among [illegible] shapes, sizes and painting styles of Classic Maya pottery, some categories have been identified as having been produced specifically for funerary purposes.[5] This [illegible] may be confirmed by the decipherment of the hieroglyphic texts painted on many Codex-style pots, whose owners frequently are referred to by the name of [illegible] the death gods rather than by their personal [illegible] (MS0647 and MS0648; Figure 3.1).[6]

Although the funerary function of these painted [illegible] cannot be denied, closer examination of many of the vessels found in burial sites reveals heavy wear patterns on their surfaces. Many plates have eroded interior surfaces, and the rims, interiors and exterior bottoms [illegible] cylinder vases, bowls and dishes also are heavily [illegible].[7] These patterns are consonant with the kinds [illegible] damage suffered by vessels used in food service and related ritual roles. This service function is confirmed by the numerous representations of pottery vessels in the historical and ritual events painted on these vessels. Plates, bowls and cylinder vases sit next to the enthroned ruler, and some closely replicate pre-Columbian vessels.[8] For example, the polychrome cylinder vase painted with a checkerboard pattern, which sits on the throne depicted on MS0607 (Figure 3.2), matches exactly a vessel in the collection of the Museo Popol Vuh, Guatemala (MS0881; Figure 3.3).

The three basic shape categories of food service vessels are represented in these images of vessels painted on the pottery, including cylinder vases and jars to hold liquids, dishes and bowls for less solid foods, and plates holding solid foods. A vase from the Pasión River region of Guatemala (MS0651; Figure 3.4) is a pictorial and hieroglyphic record of a historical meeting of three elite men inside a palace. The surrounding jar, vase, bowl and plate hold foods to be consumed on this important occasion. All four vessel shapes resemble pottery typically recovered from Classic Period trash deposits, including those found in middens outside palaces.

The pre-Columbian contents of these vessels can be deduced first from basic logic. Plates usually hold solid foods and cylindrical vases and bowls hold liquids. The hieroglyphic texts painted around the rims of the pottery, recording vessel shapes and their appropriate contents, confirm this basic logic.[9] The vessel shape and function phrase begins with the word for the type of vessel, seemingly categorized by the Maya according to a combination of function and shape, followed by the kinds of foods to be placed in the vessel. Cylinder vases and bowls are called *uch'ab*, the word in most Mayan languages for "drinking vessel."[10] This is followed by glyphs that record the type of beverage one would drink from the *uch'ab*. The most common are beverages made from cacao (chocolate), including those made from roasted and ground cacao seeds mixed with ground corn (*kakaw* or *ta y-utal kakaw*; meaning "cacao" or "cacao food/sustenance"); fresh cacao made from the sweet pulp of the cacao fruit (*tsih te'el kakaw* or "tree-fresh cacao," *tsih kakaw* or "fresh cacao," and *te'el kakaw* or "tree cacao"); cacao juice, which may be a similar drink made from the pulp of the cacao fruit; a possibly fermented cacao juice using honey (*k'ab kakaw*); and a bitter cacao drink without a sweetening agent (*ch'ah kakaw*) (figures 3.5a–e).[11] Chemical confirmation of these contents was found inside a lidded vase from Río Azul, Guatemala, whose glyphic text records cacao as its contents.[12]

3.3 MS0881

This polychrome cylinder vase's palette and geometric motifs match those of the vase depicted on MS0607 (see 3.2). (Collection of the Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquín, Guatemala.)

3.2 MS0607

An enthroned ruler gestures to standing attendants. A polychrome cylinder vase, probably holding a ritual chocolate beverage, sits next to him on the throne.

tents, name its owners and patrons and sometimes include the "signature" (name) of the painter. In a few cases, these texts also comment upon the depicted events. The causative factors behind this transformation include not only that the vessels functioned as funerary wares but also that they played a central role during important historical ritual events. They also served as social currency during the increasingly complex socio-political developments and dynamic diplomatic interactions throughout the Maya regions during the Classic Period.[3] To explore this idea further, it is necessary first to examine the different uses of the pottery based on the evidence from archaeological, art historical, epigraphic and materials science data.

From the nineteenth-century to present-day excavations of Classic Maya tombs, the consistency with which pottery vessels, and particularly the painted vessels, are found in this funerary environment has led to

A [illegible] most recipes for Classic Period drinks have [illegible] cacao is used today to flavor some corn based beverages. Sixteenth-century references provide [illegible] between these modern recipes and the Classic [illegible] recorded on the pottery. Bishop Diego de [illegible], first bishop of Yucatan, describes these drinks: "They make of ground maize and cacao a kind of foam-[illegible] drink which is very savory, and with which they [illegible] their feasts. And they get from cacao a grease [illegible] resembles butter, and from this and maize they make another beverage which is very savory and highly [illegible] of, and they make another drink from the substance of the maize both ground and raw, which is very refreshing and savory."[13] Fray Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdes describes a cacao beverage in use among the elite of sixteenth-century Nicaragua, who were heavily influenced by neighboring Maya and Aztec peoples. "From these [cacao beans] the rulers and the rich make a certain drink . . . which they hold in high esteem, and it is only the great and those who can afford it who use it."[14] Fray Diego Durán notes that, similar to the elite consumer class in Nicaragua, only those members of the Aztec privileged class could drink chocolate, although Duran does not provide any specific recipe for the drink.[15] His sixteenth-century contemporary, Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, is more specific: "The seller of fine chocolate [is] one who grinds, who provides people with drink, with repasts. She grinds cacao [beans]; she crushes, breaks, pulverizes them. She chooses, selects, separates them. She drenches, soaks, steeps them. She adds water sparingly, conservatively; aerates it; she makes it form a head, makes it foam; she removes the head, makes it thicken, makes it dry, pours water in, puts water into it. . . . She sells good, superior potable [chocolate]: the privileged, the drink of nobles, or rulers finely ground, soft, foamy, reddish, bitter; [with] chili water, with flowers . . . with vanilla . . . with wild bee

his drinking vessel for his food cacao

a

his plate for tree fresh cacao

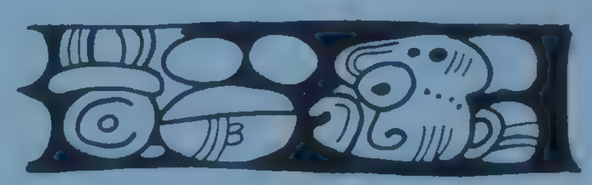
b

y-uch'ab *ta y-utath* *ti tsih*

his drinking vessel for his sustenance for fresh (substance)

c

te *kakaw*



h for cacao from the tree

d

his drinking vessel for cacao [illegible]

e

3.5

Various [illegible] Primary Standard [illegible]

a [illegible] cacao [illegible]

b [illegible] tree fresh cacao

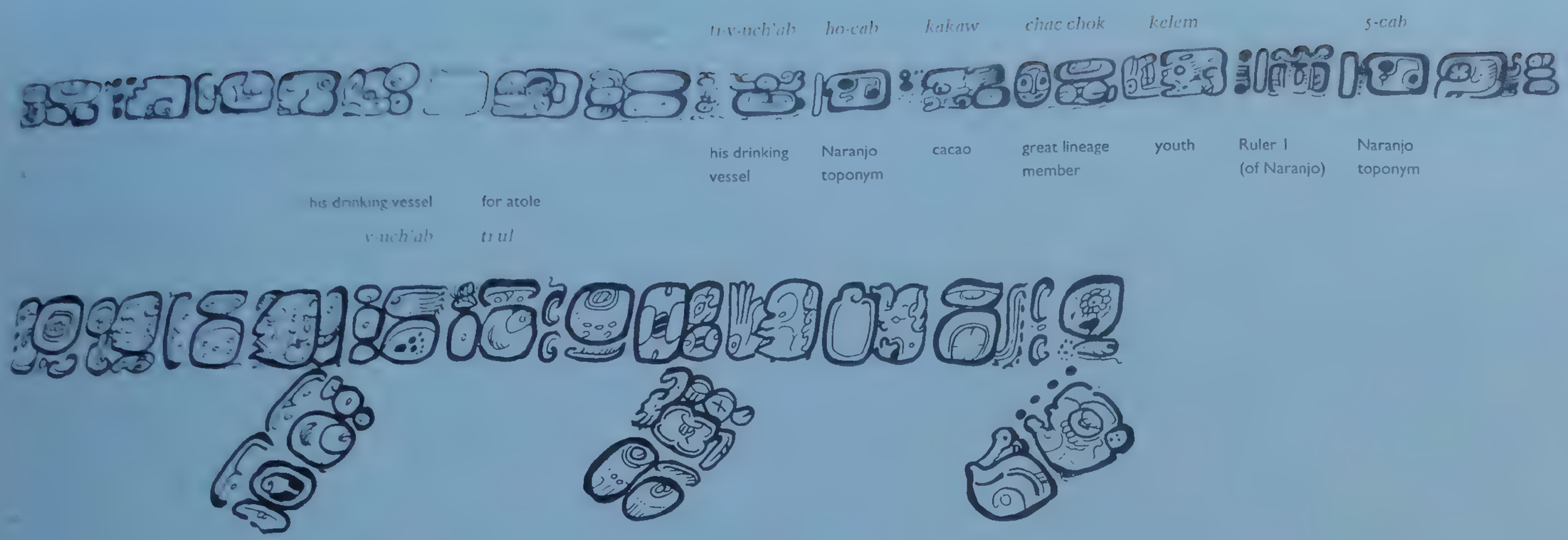
c [illegible] fresh cacao

d [illegible] tree cacao

e [illegible] cacao tree

3.4 MS0651

Three Maya lords meet inside a palace and a ritual meal will be consumed. The cylinder vase set on the throne may contain a chocolate or alcoholic beverage, which is stored in the large jar. The bowl and plate in front of the throne hold corn-based foods such as atole and tamales covered with a red sauce. *Also see catalog 12.*



A close association between the drinking of cacao beverages and the holding and/or smelling of a bouquet of flowers is found in the imagery painted on Classic Period pottery. For example, MS0651 depicts a meeting among three elite men, during which they consumed a ritual meal (Figure 3.4). The two men on the left hold bouquets of flowers in their hands, the standing lord holding the bouquet near his nose as if inhaling its fragrance; these flowers are painted white and a red-orange color. The large jar in front of the standing male has long, thin leaves protruding above its rims, leaves which originally were painted green.[22] Although it is difficult to make botanical identifications in Maya art, the associations cited above lead to the suggestion that the bouquet and leaves may be those of the *xochinacaztli/teonacaztli* plant (*Cymbopetalum penduliflorum*).

The Maya categorized bowls and dishes as they did cylinder vases; all three are called *uch'ab* "drinking vessel" (Figure 3.7a). It would seem that this pre-Columbian category refers to all vessels, regardless of their individual shapes, that hold liquidlike foods. There is a difference in the kinds of foods contained in the dishes and bowls versus those in cylinder vases. Many of the texts on dishes and bowls mention that they contain a liquid food called *ul*, which is a kind of gruel made from cooked corn and water (Figure 3.7b). Today, this food is the national corn drink of Mexico known as *atole* in the highlands and *sa'* among the Yucatec Maya.[23] Perhaps, then, the vessel classification system discovered by Houston, Stuart and Taube refers not to vessel shape (cylinders, bowls and dishes), but instead reflects vessel function vis-à-vis the food's consistency and manner of consumption by humans. If this be the case, *uch'ab* would suffice to name all shapes of vessels from which one consumes drinkable foods.[24]

The third category of vessel shape noted in the Primary Standard Sequence (PSS) is the *lak*, or plate (Figure 3.8a–c).[25] These PSS texts are less likely to name the kind

3.7

a. MS0285. A bowl from the Naranjo area of eastern Guatemala is called a *uch'ab* ("drinking vessel") (drawing by D. Reents-Budet).

b. MS1398. The hieroglyphic text on this dish states that it contained *ul*, a kind of gruel made from ground corn and different flavorings (drawing by Barbara MacLeod).

3.6

The Orejuela *Cymbopetalum penduliflorum*, known in pre-Columbian times among the Aztecs as *teonacaztli, xochinacaztli* ("ear flower") (drawing by D. Reents-Budet after Safford, 1911).

honey.[17] These accounts describe a variously flavored drink made from the roasted and crushed beans of the cacao tree. The authors clearly state that chocolate is the drink of the nobility, confirming the images painted on the Classic Maya pictorial pottery that depict palace rituals attended by elite individuals, these rituals including the consumption of cacao (see Figure 3.4).

An intriguing reference to flowers and cacao is found in the colonial sources, including Fray Ciudad Real's account of Fray Alonso Ponce's trip through Yucatan in 1588. He describes the official greetings by the lords of each Maya town visited by the friar: "One league before reaching [Ichmul], the Indians had a ramada built, in which the principle Indians were awaiting the Father Commissary with bouquets of fragrant flowers, decorated with cacao."[18] A similar reference to flowers and cacao is found in Sahagún's discussion of the Aztec seller of fine chocolate and her various flavorings of the prepared beverage: "She sells good, superior, potable [chocolate] . . . [with] chili water, with flowers, with *teonacaztli*, with vanilla, with *mecaxochitl*, with wild bee honey, with powdered aromatic flowers."[19] Sahagún notes that the flower *teonacaztli* ("sacred ear") was much used for its taste as well as fragrant odor. Francisco Hernández, the sixteenth-century medical botanist sent by King Philip II to Mexico to study this and other promising plants, describes this flower by its more common name of *xochinacaztli* ("ear flower"): "The *xochinacaztli* is a rare tree, with leaves long and narrow and of a deep green color. Its flowers, borne on a pendent velvety peduncle, are divided into leaves, which are purplish within and herbaceous without, shaped almost exactly like ears, and of a very agreeable odor. It grows in warm countries, and there is nothing else in the *tiangues* and markets of the Indians more frequently found nor more highly prized than this flower. The which is wont to give the greatest charm and taste,

3.7a

together with a very fragrant odor and flavor to that celebrated drink cacao, which they call *chocolate*, and it imparts to it certain tonic properties and wholesomeness as well."[20] William Edwin Safford discovered the botanical identity of this multipurpose special flower in 1911. In Guatemala and Chiapas, Safford found the *Orejuela* (*Cymbopetalum penduliflorum*) flower in use as a flavoring for chocolate as well as to provide a pleasing scent (Figure 3.6). O. F. Cook's 1904 report on his agricultural exploration of the Alta Verapaz of southern Guatemala describes this flower's pleasant, spicy odor, and its having ". . . the sepals and outer petals light green and the inner thicker petals of a pale dull salmon color and breaking with a bright orange-colored fracture."[21]

a

3.9

a. MS1491. The plate between the seated figures holds strips of paper or cloth upon which is dripped a sacrificial blood offering. *Also see catalog 41*

b. MS0739. The body of a sacrificed infant is laid in a flat-bottomed plate (drawing by D. Reents-Budet). *Also see catalog 86*

c. MSBX76. The Cosmic Tree rises from a plate holding a sacrificial offering (drawing by Barbara MacLeod).

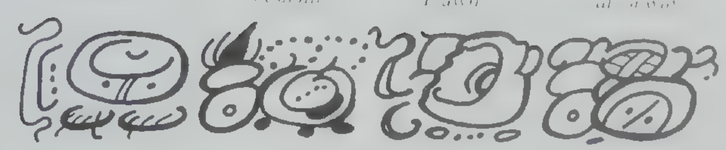
Figure 3.13b). Barbara MacLeod suggests that the name came from the Mayan positional verb *haw*, which means "face up," perhaps making reference to the addition of supports (or legs), which causes the vessel to be personified, its interior bottom surface becoming a "face." No *hawte'* has yet been found whose hieroglyphic text records its contents.[31]

The *lak* and *hawte'* plate category is the most varied of all form classes of Late Classic Maya polychrome vessels. The category also includes a very rare type of vessel nicknamed a "chip-and-dip" plate because it has attached to its inside flat surface very small bowls and it resembles modern ceramic serving plates for tortilla chips and hot sauce (cf. MS0605 and K5879; Figure 3.12a, c). Given the prevalence of sauces in modern Maya cuisine, especially among the Yucatec Maya, and the representations on the pottery of solid foods covered with a sauce (cf. Figure 3.4), it is not unreasonable to suggest that the small cup(s) inside these rare plates held

b

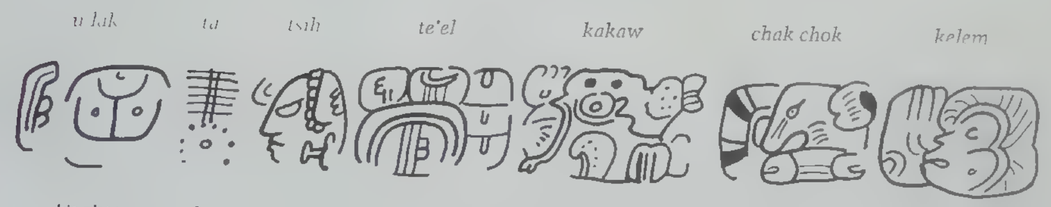
c

his plate



his plate | for pozole? | God K | pure spirit of the portal

b



u-lak | ta | tsih | te'el | kakaw | chak chok | kelem

his plate | for | tree-fresh | cacao | great lineage member | youth

c.

3.8

Vessel contents recorded on plates (*lak*):

a. MS0647: *u-lak* ("his plate") (no contents recorded).

b. Codex-style plate: *u-lak ti toham* ("his plate for pozole").

c. MSH019: *u-lak ta tsih te'el kakaw* ("his plate for tree-fresh cacao") (cacao fruit pulp).

of food served from the plate, many times mentioning only the fact that the vessel is a *lak* (Figure 3.8a). One possible explanation for this lack of specificity is that a plate was used to serve different kinds of solid foods Also, plates functioned outside the food service arena and were used as containers for sacrificial and dedica tory offerings. These plates are rendered on the pottery on the carved stone and stucco sculpture and in painted murals; they have also been excavated at many Maya sites. Their depictions on the pottery show them holding strips of paper or cloth splattered with human blood (figures 3.9a and 2.29b), the body of a sacrificed person (Figure 3.9b), or sacrificial blood from which rises the cosmic tree of Maya mythology (Figure 3.9c). These

[illegible] also were depicted in the now-faded [illegible] use C of the Palace at Palenque and the [illegible] Bonampak.[26] One unusual Early Classic [illegible] may include the word for sacrifice [illegible] thus makes direct reference to its having been used to hold an offering (MS0040; Figure 3.10a, b).[27] Some of these offering plates were carved from wood—their painted renditions are marked with a *te'* ("tree/wood") sign (cf. MSBX76; Figure 3.9c). Two similar Classic Period wooden offering plates were found preserved in the dry environment of Tiger Bay Cave, Belize.[28]

The most common food inside plates depicted on the polychrome pottery is tamales or bread made from corn, called *wah* in Yucatec Mayan.[29] In many instances, the *wah* is stacked and covered with a red sauce (cf. MS0651; Figure 3.4). These could be depictions of *noh wah* ("big bread," a layered corn bread) or one of the more fancy types of tamales such as *vaporcitos* (tamales filled with a bean filling and covered with a tomato sauce). In addition to tamales, other solid or nonliquid foods are mentioned in these plates' PSS texts. For example, a Codex-style plate is labeled an *u-lak ti toham* ("his plate for *toham*"), which may be a kind of *pozole*, a more solid form of *atole* (Figure 3.8b). The PSS on MSH019, a plate excavated from an elite burial at Holmul, Guatemala, notes that it contained tree-fresh cacao, that is the pulp of the cacao fruit (*u-lak ta tsih te'el kakaw*; Figure 3.8c).[30] This plate has high walls nearly perpendicular to its flat bottom and would hold the gelatinous pulp of the cacao fruit, which is similar in consistency to a thick *pozole* (Figure 3.13b).

The vessel shape categories and contents become less clear when we consider a specialized form the Maya called a *hawte'* (MS1421; Figure 3.11). Similar in shape to plate MSH019, a *hawte'* has a flat bottom with nearly vertical walls and three or four tall supports, or "legs

and the vase as a drinking vessel for cacao food (*uch'ab a-v-utal kakaw*).[39]

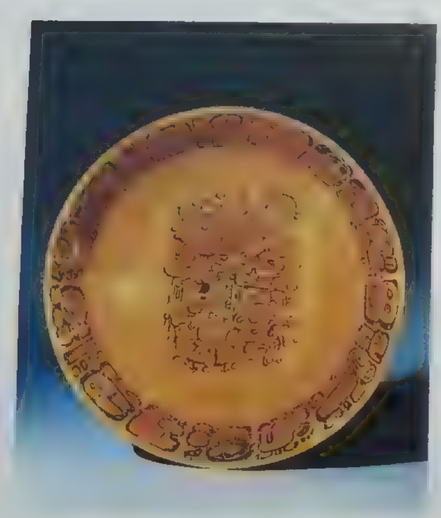
Cylinder vessels occasionally are depicted with lids (cf. Figure 2.29b), and many vase rims have extensive wear marks that imply heavy use, including the dragging of lids across the rim surface. Yet lids are not plentiful in the archaeological record nor among the thousands of unprovenienced pottery vessels in collections throughout the world.[40] Five possibilities may account for this lack of lids. First, some may have been made from perishable materials such as basketry, gourds or wood, which do not survive in the wet climate of Central America (cf. MS1389; Figure 3.15).[41] Second, lids may be easily broken, their remains quickly finding their way into the pre-Columbian landfills (that archaeologists call *middens*) and going unrecognized as lid fragments among the hundreds of thousands of small sherds excavated from these ancient middens.[42] Fourth, pottery lids may not have been plentiful. And last, looters may not place much value in lids and thus discard them.

In addition to serving as food service vessels and containers for sacrificial offerings, the painted pottery also was used to hold other ritual items. For example, a bowl depicted on a vase in the collection of Dumbarton Oaks contains a bound cloth bundle inside of which may be ceremonial regalia pertinent to the depicted ritual (MS0448; Figure 3.16).[43] To the right of this bowl is a seated male holding a mirror in front of his chest. The black area represents the mirror itself, which was made from pieces of iron pyrite, hematite or obsidian (cf. figures 3.17a, b). The mirror is encased in a framelike vessel that may be made of ceramic or more probably of wood.[44] Polychrome vessels also were used to hold specialized cache deposits that were placed inside structures as part of building dedication rites and other rituals.[45]

3.11 MS1421

A *hawte'* plate with wide, flat bottom and nearly vertical walls. The plate's tall cylindrical supports can be seen in 3.13b.

it came to being | was blessed | it happened | (at the) place of sacrifice? | the 9th successor | sun-eyed sky | mother | mother (personal name)



a

3.10

a. MS0040. This large Early Classic plate's text includes the word for sacrifice, suggesting that the plate was used to hold the offering. *Also see catalog 23.*

b. PSS text from MS0040 (drawing by Barbara MacLeod).

sauces or other foods kept separate from the plate's main contents. It is noteworthy that the vessel shape words in MS0605's PSS include both the drinking vessel and specialized plate names (*y-uch'ab u-hawte'*), possibly referring to both the tripod plate and the three small cups attached to its inside "face" (Figure 3.12b).[32]

The PSS certainly makes reference to a pre-Columbian Maya vessel classificatory system. Yet there are exceptions to this system as we currently understand it. For example, plate MS0658, a *lak*, is called a drinking vessel (*uch'ab*); the *hawte'* MSH019 is called a *lak*; and MS1059 is called a *hawte'*, even though its shape is that of a simple tripod plate with low conical-shaped feet (figures 3.13a–c). Further, in many cases the "vessel" word is left out altogether. These exceptions may indicate that what we consider to be vessel shape classificatory glyphs instead may be a function and/or content referent system loosely tied to vessel shape categories.[33]

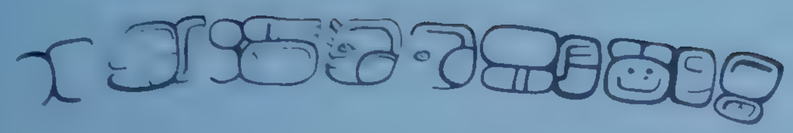
Large jars with restricted orifices also are depicted on the polychrome pottery. These jars, in both pre-Columbian and modern times, traditionally hold liquids such as water. Although a "jar" word is not found in the PSS, these jars' depictions variously show them unmarked (Figure 3.14a), marked with simple signs such as crossed bands (possibly reading *u-k'at* as "his clay object"; Figure 3.14b), or identified with decipherable hieroglyphs that may name their contents (Figure 3.14c).[34] The latter include a glyphic sign that reads *chi*, meaning *maguey* or *pulque* in the Cholan and Tzeltalan Mayan languages. *Pulque* is the alcoholic beverage made from the *maguey* plant and is a less refined form of tequila.[35] An exceptionally large jar remarkably similar to these painted versions was excavated by Payson Sheets from inside a public building at El Cerén, El Salvador. He identified this huge jar as a ceremonial liquid serving vessel used during "state" functions. It is reasonable to interpret these scenes with large jars painted on the pictorial pottery as visual records of historical events that included ceremonial drinking of alcoholic beverages.[36]

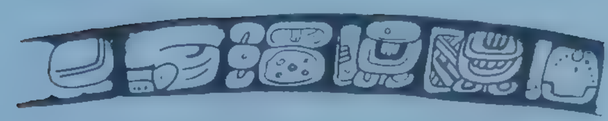
When depicted in these scenes, the vessels usually are rendered as a grouping of the basic shape repertoire of service vessels (cf. figures 3.2, 3.4 and 2.29b). Rather than showing each participant with her/his own set, the artist paints one example of each of the different shapes, providing an edited overview of the total service set. Archaeological confirmation of these service sets is found at Dos Pilas, where many burials contain a cylinder vase, a bowl and a plate provisioning the deceased with a full meal and service set for use in the afterlife. This recalls the sets of vessels excavated by Payson Sheets at El Cerén, El Salvador. Found inside the homes of the people of El Cerén, these sets include a plate and an upside-down serving bowl set atop the plate. In one case, the bowl contained traces of food.[38] Sets also are identifiable in the corpus of unprovenienced vessels, for example the Codex-style low cylinder vase MS0648 and plate MS0647 discussed above (Figure 3.1), whose respective glyphic texts categorize the plate as a *lak* ("plate

rim text

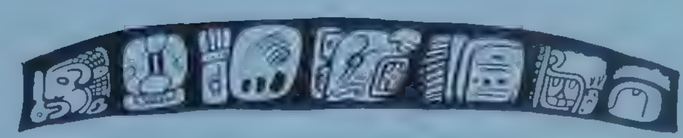
base text

y-uch'ab *u-hawte*





c



b

Another non–food-service ceramic object is the pottery drum (Figure 3.18). Drums are found in pristine condition in burials, and their broken remains come from ceremonial caves, trash deposits and inside collapsed buildings.[46] These relatively small drums were carried under the arm during public processions and ritual dance performances. Pottery vessels as well as stone monuments show musicians and dancers playing drums (cf. Figure 3.19).

The combined evidence indicates that a certain percentage of the Classic Period polychrome pottery was used to hold and serve food to the living. Many of the depictions of pottery in use are found in scenes recording historical events such as the meeting of nobles depicted on MS0651 (Figure 3.4) and MS0445 (Figure 3.20a), and the payment of tribute recorded on MS1373 (Figure 3.21). The presence of service ware in these scenes suggests that ritual meals were an integral part of Classic Maya historical events. Some meals—based on the combined presence of a vase for a chocolate-

3.12

The special "chip and dip" plates with small bowls attached to the plates' interiors. These small bowls may have held various sauces or other kinds of liquids pertinent to the plates' function.

a. MS0605. *Also see catalog 18.*

b. PSS text on MS0605.

c. K5879. The small bowl attached to the interior of this exceptionally wide plate is very shallow and probably did not hold the same type of liquid as suggested for MS0605.

3.13

a. MS0658. This plate's text calls it an *uch'ab*, a "drinking vessel" (drawing by Barbara MacLeod)

b. MSH019. This *hawte'*-shaped plate is called a *lak*, that is, a simple plate. (From the collection of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Photograph courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Photograph by Hillel Burger.)

c. MS1059. This plate is called a *hawte* although its shape is that of a simple tripod plate with low conical-shaped feet (photograph by Ronald L. Bishop)

Period rulers was Dos Pilas Ruler 2, who participated in events throughout the Río Pasión region in his successful attempt to build a new regional political power.[53]

Although we may not know all the social details of the thousands of regal meetings that took place during the Late Classic Period, they certainly included eating and ritual drinking sponsored by the host sites for the visiting royal retinues. Herein the polychrome pottery played its own special role as elite service ware. Depictions of these gatherings are rarely found on the stone monuments; one of the infrequent examples is Piedras Negras Lintel 3, which records the first *katun* anniversary of the accession of Piedras Negras Ruler 4, an event attended by Lord *Yaxún Balam*, ruler of Yaxchilán (Figure 3.22). The hieroglyphic text reads: *ak'otah ti-ꝑꝑ mo'* [Ruler 4 of Piedras Negras] *ti-ꝑꝑ-y-uch'ab-ni ti kal kakaw* [Ruler 4 of Piedras Negras], or "he danced with the ?-macaw, Ruler 4 of Piedras Negras; he got drunk on alcoholic cacao, Ruler 4 of Piedras Negras."[54] The text clearly states that part of the anniversary ceremony involved drinking an alcoholic beverage and dancing

based drink, a jar holding an alcoholic beverage such as *balche*, a bowl containing cereal-like food such as *pozole* or *atole*, and a plate piled with solid foods such as tamales or *noh wah*—were rather substantial.

Most of these historical events are shown taking place inside buildings that closely resemble the palace structures or elite residential compounds found at Maya sites. For example, the artist who painted MS0445 renders the building's piers as broad vertical bands that divide the vase's pictorial space into two scenes (Figure 3.20a). Note the piers topped by supernatural jaguar heads, which recall the plentiful stucco sculpture that decorated Classic Period buildings' upper facades (Figure 3.20b). The pottery painters consistently used the piers, upper facade lines and the floor or upper steps of the palace platforms to define the upper and lower registers of the pictorial space on the vases, both painted red—as were many Maya buildings. The artists also depicted the swag curtains that hung inside Maya doorways, tied in place with cords strung through stone crosspieces built into the inner wall surfaces at each side of the buildings' entrances (cf. MS0651; Figure 3.4).[47] In these historical palace scenes, the most important participant (or *ahaw*) can be identified because he sits on a bench, a common architectural component of elite structures (cf. MS1373; Figure 3.21).[48]

These palace scenes are pictorial records of specific sociopolitical events and royal visits among the elite.[49] Royal visits took place for a number of reasons, including initiation to particular offices and rulership accession rituals. These same events are recorded on the public stone monuments, such as the visit to Piedras Negras by elite young men from Lacanhá, Bonampak and Yaxchilán, who participated in an elaborate ritual involving warriors dressed for battle, and the Calakmul ruler Jaguar-Paw who traveled to El Perú to witness the accession of *Ma K'ina Balam*.[50] Other regal visits took place on the occasion of calendrical *katun*-ending rituals (a *katun* is a period of twenty years in the ancient Maya calendar system) and for the marriage rites of royalty from different sites (e.g., Ruler 1 of Dos Pilas marrying a woman from Itzán, a Naranjo lord marrying Lady 6-Sky of Dos Pilas, *Yaxún Balam* of Yaxchilán marrying a woman from Motul de San José, and the fifteenth ruler of Copán marrying a lady from Palenque).[51]

At various times during the Classic Period, rulers of opposing sites would band together to wage war (e.g., Shield Jaguar II of Yaxchilán joined with *Chan Muan* of Bonampak), and at the end of the successful campaign they would celebrate together. These expansionistic campaigns occasionally led to royalty from the victorious site acceding to the throne of the defeated site.[52] Monumental stone inscriptions contain myriad references to royal visits and sociopolitical relationships among the ruling elites of different sites. For example, the rulers Shield Jaguar II and *Yaxún Balam* of Yaxchilan visited La Pasadita at least three times during their lifetimes. And one of the most politically astute Classic

the potential power of the royal elite and the constituent populations that were jockeying for position in the increasingly competitive sociopolitical and economic milieu of the Late Classic Period.

One of the necessary criteria enabling a vessel to function as social currency is that it be a special object such as a vase finely painted by a well-trained artist. In some cases the artist's name, signed at the end of the PSS text or within the pictorial scene, lends additional value to the piece. A typical artist's "signature" (or nominal phrase) from the Classic Period includes the social titles that identify him as a member of elite Maya society, in some cases as the son of a ruler.[57] Much more common than the artists' "signatures," however, are recognizable pottery painting styles that we now know were produced in specific areas and sites. Many of these vessels end their PSS texts with the name or elite titles of the owner/patron of the vessel. An excellent example is the Buenavista Vase, excavated from a tomb at Buenavista del Cayo, Belize, and which was painted by a master artist whose works are easily distinguishable in the cor-

3.14

Depictions of water jars (*ollas*) on the pictorial pottery:

a. K5445. The jar is unmarked as to form or contents.

b. MS0652. The three crossed bands on the jars may identify these as "clay objects" (*k'at*).

c. K1092. The jar is marked with a glyph reading *chi*, which may identify its contents as an alcoholic beverage made from the maguey plant.

The event is taking place inside a typical palace structure with a broad stairway leading to the throne where Ruler 4 presides. Set on the floor in front of the throne and in the center of the gathered nobles is a lidded cylinder vase that probably holds the alcoholic cacao beverage consumed by the gathered lords. Polychrome pottery shows these dances, which are integral to Classic Maya ritual, taking place on the palaces' broad stairways (cf. Figure 3.23).

In addition to its elite service ware role, polychrome pottery also functioned as social currency ("trade ware"). For example, an *ahaw* would give a finely painted vase to an elite person from another site as part of the process of establishing and maintaining social and political relationships.[55] Although "trade ware" has been proposed as the reason for such movement of the pictorial pottery, the underlying social impetus and meaning of such foreign objects has received less attention. One of the most famous examples of "trade ware" is the Quetzal Vase, discovered in the tomb of an elite person at Copán (MSC091; Figure 3.24). This vase was not made in the Copán Valley nor anywhere in Honduras. Its painting style and paste chemistry indicate that it was created in north-central Belize (see Chapter 5).[56] The Quetzal Vase, more than just "trade ware," probably came to Copán as part of high status social and political connections between the ruling elite from these two regions. This fine vase could be used as special service ware during the social rituals that were an integral part of foreign interaction. The vase also could have been a regal gift "spent" as social currency. Its possession by its new owner would underscore his connections with the giver as well as afford him status and power because of the vase's connection with its foreign and possibly royal origin. In short, the vase becomes a multi-tiered symbol of reciprocal political and social obligations. Through the creation of these outstanding polychrome vessels, the Maya painters were extending

part of hundreds of vessels painted in the Holmul-style by the idiosyncratic shapes of his glyphs, their fine line details, and the artist's specific glyphic choices from the iss repertoire (MS1416; Figure 3.25). This artist painted numerous vessels in his highly individualistic style at the behest of Lord *K'ak' Til*, a powerful ruler of Naranjo who guided the site through its eighth-century regional ascendancy.[28]

If we are able to identify "foreign" pottery in the archaeological record because of the different painting styles and artists' hands, so too could the Classic Maya. Pictorial polychrome pottery is a hallmark of the Late Classic Period, during which the many distinct painting styles developed as quickly as did the ever-more-numerous centers of power that together wove a dense and complex fabric of interacting and competing polities. The correlation between the development of the myriad pottery painting styles and the complex political scenario that characterize the Late Classic Period is not coincidental because the painted pottery functioned as an integral component of the social politics of the time. Archaeologist Prudence Rice has discussed decorative styles in archaeological ceramics. "Styles send messages of social, political, and economic group affiliation that are known and recognized by the person displaying the message and by the person intended to receive it. The need for such messages arises as societies grow larger and more complex, with an increasing need for the members to convey information about themselves to others who may be physically or socially distant. The messages should be readily apparent visually and capable of being decoded by their audience."[29] We know that specialized polychrome pottery functioned as service

3.16 MS0448

Three elite Maya men sit inside a palace and participate in a vision quest rite. The central figure (depicted frontally) stares into a mirror entramed in wood and held by an attendant. The second attendant guards a painted bowl containing a cloth bundle, inside of which may be ceremonial regalia pertinent to the depicted ritual. *Also see Catalog 14*

3.15 MS1380

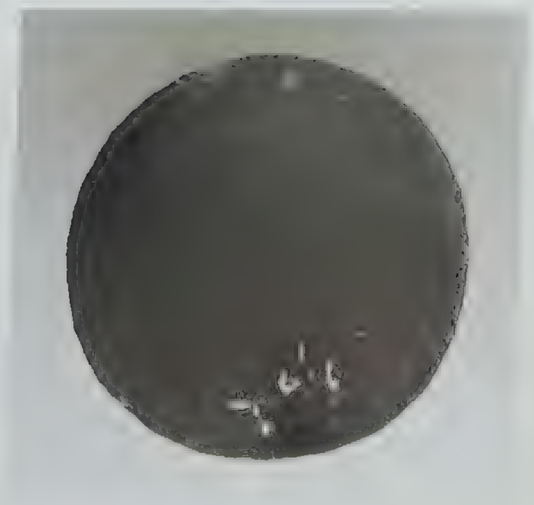
The cylinder vase sitting next to the enthroned ruler has a lid that appears to be made from woven material such as basketry. *Also see catalog 16.*

3.18 MS0207

A large version of the polychrome ceramic drums carried by dancers during public ritual performances.

3.19 MS1002

The scene on this bowl depicts a procession that includes a Maya orchestra. Note the musician playing a ceramic drum cradled under his arm.



a.

b.

3.17

a. An obsidian mirror from highland Mexico. (Photograph by Los Angeles County Museum of Art.) *Also see catalog 15.*

b. A unique Classic Maya wooden sculpture depicts a kneeling male personage who holds on his lap a framed hematite mirror recalling the figure painted on MS0448. (From the collection of The Art Museum, Princeton University. Museum purchase, Fowler McCormick Fund (figure) and Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Bower (mosaic hematite mirror). Photograph copyright Trustees of Princeton University.)

ware during elite Maya rituals, and all evidence indicates that some of these vessels were transferred to foreign sites as part of the ritual gift-giving that traditionally accompanies sociopolitical intercourse. In this environment, the more recognizable the painting style, the more socially valuable and politically efficacious is the object; that is to say, it behooves both givers and receivers to manipulate vessels painted in highly distinctive and easily recognizable styles so that the object can better function as a signifier of social identifications and political bonds.[60] It is quite possible that specific vessels to which the Maya attached special importance changed hands more than once. As anthropologist Lewis Hyde points out, the act of giving enhances the worth of the gifted object because what actually is given is social as well as material.[61]

When art becomes a commodity that circulates as social currency, it is increasingly important to create "additives of prestige" that enhance the objects' value. Different cultures have developed various strategies to achieve this end, but one of the recurring additives is the recognition of the works of master artists. Among literate societies, this is manifested not only as a recognizable creative style but also as the signed work of art. It is probable that this need for additives of prestige was a primary impetus behind the sudden, and unprecedented, emergence during the Late Classic Period of signed art works, especially the socially active pottery. The signed pottery vessel created by an elite artist whose familial association included the ruling family would carry even greater value.

This same need probably lies behind the simultaneous development of "name-tagging," wherein nominal phrases appear on elite personal objects naming their owner and her elite titles.[62] When functioning as gifts, these personalized objects carried "value-added" status, enhancing the owner's act of giving as well as the status of the receiver (cf. MS1416, whose PSS text ends with the name of the vase's patron/owner, Lord *K'ak'-Til* of Naranjo; Figure 3.25). In the political realm, a master artist's signed work of name-tagged art would be a strong reinforcement of sociopolitical ties between giver and receiver and would provide a permanent presence of (and for) the original owner as long as the object was in use. These objects would be especially valuable when they were used during private elite events and public rituals because of the broad recognition by the gathered participants of the art work, its creator and its owners.

Within this social realm, the vessel itself becomes a central part of the ritual performances that reify sociopolitical relationships and institutions. In a small way, the PSS is a participant in this process in which writing is extended beyond its encoding spoken language and becomes part of the performance. This can be seen in three aspects of the PSS. First, the more accomplished pottery artists painted embellished versions of glyphic signs, including many head variants, rather than the

3.20

a. MS0445. Nobles gather inside a palace. The lidded cylinder vase next to the en throned *ahaw* suggests that ritual drinking was part of the event. *Also see catalog 40*

b. Palenque Palace House D. The broad stairs and multiple piers of this palace closely resemble the architecture depicted on MS0445 (photo by D. Reents-Budet). Most of the stucco decoration that embellished the palace's upper facade has fallen. This decoration recalls the one rendered in paint on MS0445.

3.21 MS1373

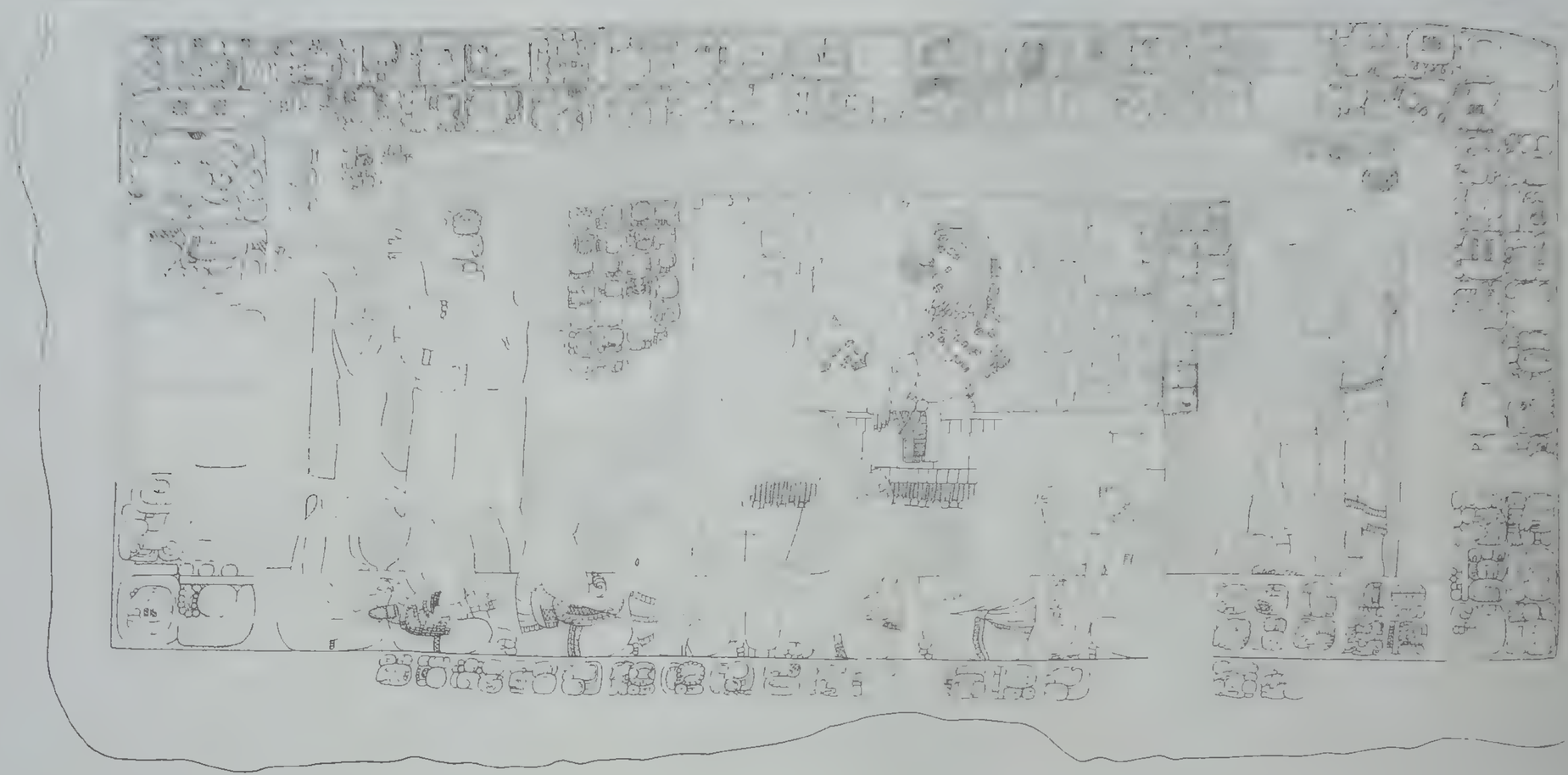
This vase from the *Ik'* site polity records the payment of tribute by a secondary *ahaw* to a primary lord who is seated on the throne. The text above the lord seated on the floor states that a payment is being made. *Also see catalog 48.*

3.21

more usual and less theatrical geometric versions of these signs. Also, the PSS is written primarily with phonetic signs that require a high degree of education to be read. Compare these two features to the public stone inscriptions, which used a greater proportion of logographic and pictographic signs, whose glyphs often are less-embellished and for which there is greater use of simpler geometric signs rather than head variants. Second, the master pottery painters developed personal calligraphic styles that were (and are today) immediately recognizable as the works of specific individuals. The third and crucial piece of evidence comes from a linguistic analysis of the PSS. The grammatical structure of its "blessing" verbal phrase is such that the action is understood as affecting three objects: the vessel, its surface and its painting. Together, these three features point to

3.20a

use of one of his top artist's vases intimates the degree of importance he placed on an alliance with Buenavista and its subservient territory. His presentation of this exceptionally fine vase to the lord of Buenavista was the material reflection of an important political moment in Classic Period history. Underscoring this interpretation is the fact that the royal ceramic workshops at both sites were creating pottery painted in the same Holmul-style,



3.22

Piedras Negras Lintel 3 records the gathering of elite young men from Lacanhá, Bonampak and Yaxchilan to participate in an elite warrior initiation ritual (drawing by John Montgomery).

the artist's painterly act as a formal performance on the social stage. This "blessed" art object then plays a second role in the hands of its elite owner and also may perform again on the interregional stage of Classic Period social politics.

If styles send messages of social, political and economic group affiliation that are known and recognized by the person displaying the message and by the person intended to receive it, it should be possible to identify sociopolitical ties among archaeological sites based on the presence of specific styles of painted pottery in burials and other special contexts. Further, it may be possible to infer relative sociopolitical rank among these sites, or at least among the various residential divisions within the respective sites, based on the kinds of polychrome pottery found therein.[63] For example, the Buenavista Vase is the work of a renowned master artist who was painting pictorial pottery for Lord *K'ak'-Til* of Naranjo (MS1416; Figure 3.25). The vase probably was given to the ruler of Buenavista del Cayo (Belize) as a royal gift and can be seen as an indicator of sociopolitical ties between the two sites. Interestingly, a royal ceramic workshop found at Buenavista was churning out hundreds, maybe thousands, of vessels painted in the same Holmul style as the Buenavista vase (Figure 3.26).[64] However, none of the products of this workshop equal the artistry of the Buenavista Vase. These local

trates in his person and household the symbolic attributes of rule that are duplicated by lesser rulers down the scale of state organization.[73] It follows that lower-quality painted pottery is associated with the lower socioeconomic and political levels of the Classic Maya.[74] Given these patterns, polychrome pottery can be used as an indicator of sociopolitical rank for modern

3.25 MS1416

The Buenavista Vase was excavated from a royal burial at the site of Buenavista del Cayo, Belize. It was made in an elite pottery workshop located near Naranjo and was painted by a master artist who created many vases for the powerful Naranjo Ruler *K'ak' Til*. *Also see catalog 95*

3.26

These cylinder vases were made in the elite polychrome pottery workshop that was associated with an elite residential group at Buenavista del Cayo, Belize. Stylistically and chemically, they are the local version of the regional Holmul-style pottery (photo by D. Reents-Budet)

interpretations of the archaeological contexts in which these vessels are found.[75]

The many nonburial contexts in which polychrome pottery functioned indicates that it played a multiplicity of roles. This multiplicity of functions recalls the patterns of usage of Ulua Polychrome pottery in Honduras: "Ulua Polychrome forms are serving vessels . . . [and] . . . are found in sites of all settlement levels, from the humblest to the most complex. They are recovered primarily as domestic refuse. Their use in caches and burials seems to be part of a continuum of function, not their unique purpose."[76] Classic Maya painted pottery often is found in a funerary context and its imagery often deals with the afterlife and the supernatural realm. However, the polychrome pottery also must have been an integral part of the continuum of Maya life. This special pottery played many roles—from mundane to elite food service vessels, as containers for nonfood ritual offerings, as records of historical events and religious ideology, and as elite performers in high-status environments—prior to ending its pre-Columbian life in graves and midden deposits as the detritus of civilization.

3.24 (MS0001): The Quetzal Vase

This cylinder vase was found in the major Maya city of Copan, Honduras. Stylistic and [illegible] analyses of the vase identify it as [illegible] an elite pottery workshop in north central Belize near the pre-Columbian town of Altun Ha. (From the collection of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Photograph courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Photograph by Hillel Burger.) *Also see catalog 57*

which is a reflection of their cooperative interaction during the eighth century.[66]

Central to the use of polychrome pottery as an indicator of relative sociopolitical rank is the fact that the majority of the Classic Period polychrome pottery is not elaborately decorated. Most are painted by less-talented and less-trained artists. The majority is characterized by simple pictorial compositions and short versions of the PSS that do not include the personal names of the owners/patrons or of the artists. In fact, many vessels' hieroglyphic texts are "pseudoglyphs," that is, unrecognizable and/or undecipherable glyphs that may not have been readable even by the Classic Maya.[67] In short, the proportion of exceptionally well-painted and personalized pottery to the significantly greater numbers of less elaborately painted vessels reflects the proportion of the more powerful sites and their ruling elite to the more numerous politically, socially and economically subservient sites, their rulers, lower-tier administrators and supporting populations.[68]

In the archaeological record, polychrome pottery is found not only in elite residences but also in refuse dumps throughout the sites, including those associated with the thousands of small housemounds that were the residences of the "commoners." Not surprisingly, this pottery rarely represents the work of the better artists.[69] This broad yet selective distribution follows that noted above; that is, the better-painted wares are associated with, and are more plentiful in, the higher-status residences whereas lesser-quality pottery is more prevalent in lower-status living compounds. This pattern duplicates the distribution of luxury ceramics in the later Aztec Empire of highland Mexico. Archaeologist Michael Smith notes that Aztec painted pottery is widely distributed, although he points out that the luxury wares are found less often among rural households.[70]

A picture emerges of painted pottery circulated widely throughout Maya society, which was socially and politically important to its users.[71] Differences in distribution at a site generally are correlated with the quality of the artistry, the better-painted vessels generally being found in higher-status environments.[72] This distribution reflects anthropologist Richard Fox's description of the segmentary state, in which the central ruler concen-

[illegible] Wa[illegible] (see Figure 100). Thus the word may have a more general meaning referring to something with a flat surface.

26. Arlen Chase (1985:106–201), among many others, provides a discussion of the use of plates to hold human blood offerings during sacrificial rituals. Also see Schele and Miller (1986:181).

27. Schele and Miller (1986:181–82, 194) concur with this interpretation for at least some of the Classic Period polychrome plates. The authors discuss two other plates whose imagery directly implies their function as vessels used to hold the bloody paper, lancets and ropes used in human bloodletting rites. However, the majority of sacrificial blood containers depicted in Maya art are not readily identifiable as polychrome plates. For example, on Yaxchilán Lintel 14, Lady *Sahal* is rendered in the throes of a bloodletting vision-quest ritual. Held in her outstretched hand is a plate containing her sacrificial obsidian lancet and blood covered strips of paper. There is no indication, however, that this is a polychrome ceramic plate. The bloodletting plate on Yaxchilan Lintel 17 likewise does not appear to be a polychrome vessel, its shape more closely resembling the monochrome and unslipped basins frequently found in the archaeological ceramic assemblages at many lowland Maya sites. The bloodletting container on Yaxchilan Lintel 24 is clearly an elaborately woven basket. The available data, then, point to a wide variety of uses for the plate form. Within this form class are polychrome plates, only a few of whose texts or shapes imply their function as sacrificial offering containers.

28. The Tiger Bay Cave tripod plates were discovered by Tom Miller and Carol Jo Rushin in 1974 (Barbara MacLeod, 1993:personal communication). That the Mayans used caves for sacrificial rites is well documented, and it is probable that these two plates were used during such rituals. See Kerr (1992:436) for other examples of wooden offering plates.

29. After Karl Taube (1989). MacDuff Everton (1991:81) lists a few of the different kinds of *wah* commonly eaten today in Yucatan. These include *wah hay pak'ach* (the common thin tortilla), *pim* (fat tortillas), *op* (toasted tortillas) and *xik wah* (a large, grainy and toasted tortilla). Everton (1991:81–82) goes on to discuss as least eleven different kinds of tamales, some with various fillings and others covered with particular sauces.

30. See Merwin and Valliant (1932).

31. The possible exception is the unusual square *hawte'* excavated from an elite burial at Dos Pilas by the Proyecto Regional Arqueologico Petexbatún in 1989. Stephen Houston suggested that the PSS on this plate reads *u wah kan hawte'*, or "his tamale plate", the *k'an* glyph here making reference to corn/tamales (Houston, 1992:paper presented at the Sexto Simposio de Arqueologia Guatemalteca, Museo Nacional, Guatemala). However, Barbara MacLeod translates this *k'an* glyph as "sacred," the complete phrase reading "his sacred *hawte'*." MacLeod notes that the *k'an* glyph would need an *-al* suffix in order for the glyph to be correct grammatically in the context suggested by Houston (MacLeod, 1992:personal communication). This is not the only reference to the sacred nature of pottery vessels. Nikolai Grube has found an incised vessel in a private collection in Germany whose PSS includes the phrase *hawte' u k'ul b'aib, y uch'ab* or "his *hawte'*, its sacred name, his drinking vessel" (Grube, 1991:personal communication to Linda Schele).

Notes

1. See Schmandt-Besserat (1991).

2. Robin Robertson's (n.d., 1986) analyses of pre-Classic pottery from northern Belize establish the quotidian and ritual service functions of particular forms of pottery from this early tradition. Her categories of vessel form and function, in particular the Maya ritual forms, presage those of the Classic Period.

3. See Michael Coe (1973, 1978) for a discussion of the funerary function of the pictorial pottery. See Sally Price (1991:109) for a discussion of the social currency function of art among the Maroons of Surinam; her analysis is equally pertinent to the function of Classic Maya polychrome pottery. See Prudence Rice (1987: 266–67) for a discussion of pottery as a conveyer of information, including the users' social, political and economic group affiliations.

4. A synopsis of this interpretation is provided by Michael Coe (1973). He amplifies his interpretation through the identification of much of the painted imagery as pertaining to the Maya underworld, describing the ultimate function of painted Maya pottery as comprising ". . . one great mythic cycle, along with an explanatory chant, to prepare the defunct for the journey into the Underworld" (pp. 11, 13).

5. For example, Joseph Ball's analyses of the Cui Orange-polychrome tradition make a strong argument for these plates having been produced exclusively to be placed in tombs (1975:32–33). Also see the discussion of this ceramic type (also known as "Turkey Vulture" plates) in Chapter 5.

6. After MacLeod (n.d.: [illegible]) also see chapters 4 and 5. Excavations at Nakbe, Guatemala during the [illegible] field season have found burials without Codex-style pottery. Further, many sherds painted in this style have been found in trash deposits associated with domestic structures at Nakbe and the nearby site of El Mirador. These new data bring into question the interpretation of Codex-style pottery as a purely funerary ware (Richard Hansen, 1993, personal communication).

7. Persis Clarkson notes heavy wear on some of the finest painted vessels, which prompted her to reach the same conclusion that these pots were well-used before they became funerary objects (1978:87).

8. The vessel shape terminology used throughout this book follows that formalized by Jeremy Sabloff (1975).

9. See Houston and Taube (1987:38–41) for their original discovery of what they called the "name-tagging" of pottery vessels, including their decipherment of the word for "plate." Also see Houston, Stuart and Taube (1989) for their seminal article presenting their discovery of the vessel shape classificatory glyphs in the PSS.

10. See MacLeod (n.d.:327–28); Houston and Taube (1987:40).

11. David Stuart (1986:3) deciphered the glyph for cacao (*kakaw*) on the pottery. MacLeod (n.d.:394) deciphered the *ta y utal kakaw* phrase as "cacao food/sustenance." Nikolai Grube (1990:321) was the first to identify the glyphs for "bitter cacao" (*ch'ah kakaw*).

Some short PSSes end with *y uch'ib ta tsih*, or "his drinking vessel for *tsih*." Nikolai Grube and Werner Nahm suggest that *tsih* may be the name for a "Youthful Cacao God" (Grube and Nahm, 1991; personal communication to MacLeod [Dec 16th, 1991 letter]). On the vases, then, MacLeod suggests that the Maya painters used the nominal for the Cacao God to refer to a cacao beverage.

12. The analyses discovered the presence of fats coming from cacao. These analyses were completed by Stanley Tarka, Jr. and W. Jeffrey Hurst of the Hershey Foods Corporation; reported in Stuart (1988).

13. MacDuff Everton (1991:50–51) describes some of the different kinds of corn based drinks commonly found among the Yucatec Maya today, including *sakah*, a sacred corn drink prepared by the *hmen* ("wise men" or "priests") for their ceremonies. Wilson Popenoe (1919: 403–9) describes *batido*, a cacao based drink in highland Guatemala flavored with the Orejuela flower and sweetened with the syrup (sap) of the maguey plant. He also mentions *pinol*, made with corn, toasted cacao, cinnamon, anise and sometimes Orejuela flower as seasonings. Also see MacLeod (n.d.:378–421) for a discussion of the "recipes," that is, the contents of Classic Maya pottery vessels recorded in their hieroglyphic texts.

14. Tozzer (1941:90).

15. Fray Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdes, in Blom (1932:537).

16. Duran (1975:200).

17. Fray Bernardino de Sahagun [1529–1585] (Sahagun 1974, Book X:93).

18. Ciudad Real in Blom (1932:373).

19. Fray Bernardino de Sahagun [1529–1585] (Sahagun 1974, Book X:93).

20. F. Hernandez [1570, published 1615], cited in Safford (1911:429).

21. Cook in Safford (1911:429–3[illegible]).

22. Many art historians who have worked extensively with Classic Maya polychrome pottery believe that those areas now painted gray may originally

[illegible] New [illegible] a pyrite [illegible] pottery dish. The [illegible] depicted on the [illegible] Cross vessel [illegible] instead [illegible] wood; there are other pre [illegible] jade mirrors set within [illegible] such as the famous early [illegible] Mexican framed mirror [illegible] collection of Dumbarton Oaks, [illegible] D.C.

[illegible] For example, Iulia Hendon reports [illegible] painted cylinders and bowls in [illegible] in structures in the Sepulturas res- [illegible] compounds at Copan (Hendon, [illegible] 378). Uncertainty remains, however, whether these polychrome vessels held [illegible] integral to the cache ritual during which they were used. Under the floor of the Temple of the Cross at Palenque were [illegible] and ten caches, including one containing a painted bowl and another containing a lidded polychrome cylinder inside of which were found bat bones (Ruz Lhuillier, 1955). Similar caching of painted pottery is reported at Piedras Negras (W. Coe, [illegible] in Jovee, 1991). In the East Group Plaza at Piedras Negras, Structure O-13 was the focus of intense cache activities, including thirty-one separate caches under the floor of the innermost room in the structure. William Coe describes a diversity of container shapes in these caches, including painted cylinders. The placing of caches at the dedication rites for buildings and monumental stone sculpture is well-documented from archaeological excavations as well as from the hieroglyphic record itself (cf. the Tablet of the Slaves from Group 4 at Palenque [illegible] and Mathews [illegible]). The glyph [illegible] is a stylized representation of a plate whose shape recalls the sacrificial offering plates discussed above.

46. Among drums that were found archaeologically, there are some from Uaxactun (R. E. Smith, 1954:29, Figure 2b and 1955:100, Figure 41b), Lubaantun, Belize (Hammond, 1975:322, Figure 114a), San Jose, Belize (J. E. S. Thompson, 1939: Plate 22, b2), and Cueva de los Quetzales, Guatemala (James Brady, 1993:personal communication).

47. After Pollock (1965:405–6).

48. Edward Kurjack (1974) and William Sanders (1981) suggest that the building complexes constituting the core, or "center," of Maya sites were the residences of the heads of the elite (ruling) lineages of the sites. See William Haviland (1981) for a discussion of his excavation of the residential compound of a high ruler of Tikal, this "palace" complex located in the heart of the city.

Wendy Ashmore (1991) has differentiated by function the individual buildings that comprise these elite compounds. Her work at Copan identifies some of the elite compounds' buildings as oriented toward ritual activity, whereas other buildings are linked to more secular activities. Given the ritualized nature of the historical events depicted on the pottery, it is probable that these architectural renderings are depictions of Ashmore's royal ritual function buildings. Also see E. Wyllys Andrews and William Fash (1992:63–88) for a discussion of the functional changes to buildings in a royal residential complex at Copan that was located at the southern edge of the Acropolis. Structure 1-[illegible]-2. Andrews and Fash document the tendency for this complex's buildings to retain a similar form and function throughout the stages of building and modification during the latter hundred years of its use in Late to Terminal Classic times. The authors also document a concomitant trend away from purely domestic structures to ones associated with public rituals. The buildings in this royal complex at Copan bear a striking similarity to those depicted on the pictorial pottery in which sociopolitical rituals take place.

49. See Linda Schele and Peter Mathews (1991), and Linda Schele and David Freidel (1990), for discussions of specific royal visits during the Classic Period. Dwight Wallace (1977:8–9) discusses sixteenth century regal meetings at Utatlan between the site's elite and visiting merchants. These merchants were themselves of a privileged status—they ate and conversed with the Utatlan lords, could read and write hieroglyphs, and were instructed in the musical arts, all of which were activities of the educated elite.

50. The initiation ritual event is recorded pictorially and glyphically on Piedras Negras Lintel 2. See Linda Schele and Mary Miller (1986:148–49) for a discussion of the monument's imagery. The El Perú event is recorded on a panel fragment in the Tamayo Collection (see Schele and Freidel, 1990:457). See Schele and Freidel (1990) and Houston (1993: 123) for further examples of regal visits throughout the Maya lowlands during the Classic Period.

51. After Linda Schele and Peter Mathews (1991:242–43).

52. A well-known example of Great Jaguar Paw of Tikal putting his brother Stormy Sky in charge at Uaxactun after his defeat at Dzibanché [illegible] Schele and Freidel [illegible]

32. An alternative use for these small cups on the *hawte* plates, if the function of this special plate form were excluded, associated with sacrificial ritual offerings could have been to hold blood offerings.

33. Houston, Stuart and Taube (1989: 724–25) came to the same conclusion stating that the hieroglyphic categories may cross cut form and function.

34. Classic Maya jars are rarely slipped. Instead this form class represents a standard utilitarian liquid-holding vessel whose decoration rarely goes beyond a simple manipulation of the wet surface of the clay (e.g., scraping the surface to create a roughened pattern or adding a simple decoration of clay around the jar's neck). Sometimes these jars have slip paint applied to their rims, but only rarely do we find polychrome jars. The few polychrome jars discovered archaeologically have a small holding capacity in comparison to their utilitarian cousins, and these must have had a specialized function. I know of only one of these rare small jars painted with a PSS (MS1492). Most unfortunately, the vessel word is completely eroded. The following glyph, which should name the vessel's contents, is partially eroded although T568 phonetic *lu* is visible, which suggests that the jar held *ul* (atole).

35. See Kerr (1989: 42, 58) and Stross and Kerr (1990: 354, 357) for discussions of the *chu* and *cab* contents of these depicted jars. The *cab* sign possibly refers to honey from which is made a fermented beverage called *balche* that the Maya of today, as well as during pre-Columbian times, drink during ritual events. The *cab-in* sign (T526) is found on vase MS1158. This vase has been repainted heavily in modern [illegible]

[illegible] the [illegible] Kerr suggest that [illegible] ages also may have included [illegible] Stone and Cook [illegible]

36. Payam Sheets discusses the excavation of this public building at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History's symposium, "New Perspectives on the Maya" (November 3, 1991, Los Angeles, California).

37. Joel Palka (1992 personal communication).

38. Reported by William Booth in *The Washington Post*, Sunday, October 8, 1989. An analog from the site of Tonina, Mexico may be a cylinder vase found in a cache in the probable residential Complex IXIM (Becquelin and Baudez 1984: Figure 186). Here the cylinder vase is capped by what appears to be a lid. However, on closer inspection, the lid is a small footed bowl set upside-down atop the cylinder. These two vessels, then, probably represent a specialized service set used during the ritual caching activity.

39. The Maya also produced pottery sets used as cache vessels, although the majority of these are not painted in polychrome and thus are not germane to the present study. Suffice it to say that these other vessels, including lidded bowls, two similar plates placed lip to lip, lidded cylinder vases and square lidded boxes, served as cache vessels (cf. D. Chase 1988; W. Coe 1959; Ruz Lhuillier 1958; R. E. Smith 1955).

40. Lids are recorded in the archaeological literature (cf. D. Chase [illegible]; Santa Rita, Belize; R. E. Smith 1955; Uaxactun, Guatemala; and Satterthwaite 1954: figs. 2 and 3; Caracol, Belize). In this book, examples of lidded [illegible] Belize, included a bowl contain[illegible]

[illegible] Belize; and the Minnesota Pacific Coast Tika Project [illegible] see Chapter 1 and catalogue [illegible]). Although a statistical analysis remains to be done, a cursory examination of the literature on Classic Maya pottery suggests that many of the lidded vessels come from the Early Classic Period (A.D. 250–550). This may be an artifact of unintended selectivity by archaeologists and looters, or it may mean that the majority of Early Classic lids were made of ceramic whereas a greater proportion of Late Classic lids were made of perishable materials such as wood, gourds or basketry.

41. A second interpretation of the pattern on this lid is that it represents a jadeite encrusted lid similar to the lidded cylinder vase covered with small plaques of jadeite found in Ruler A's (*Hasaw Ka'an K'awil*) tomb at Tikal (B. Kerr, personal communication).

42. Occasionally, lids made from large body sherds are found archaeologically like the sherd lid made to cover a polychrome cylinder vase found in an [illegible] tomb at Chac Balam, Belize (in [illegible] vol. 14, no. 6, November [illegible]). These lids were constructed at a later [illegible] than the vessel itself and represent recycling of other pottery, usually [illegible] or monochrome slipped ware.

43. See Brian Stross [illegible] cursion of ritual bundles. Project [illegible] vated and recorded elite burials [illegible] additional data concerning the [illegible] contents of pottery vessels. For [illegible] a royal burial in Structure [illegible] Belize, included a bowl contain[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] design [illegible] school [illegible] constituent artists [illegible] to a particular [illegible] expression that repre[illegible] of a specific area. Also [illegible]

[illegible] See Chapter [illegible] for a detailed discus[illegible] pseudoglyph" texts that [illegible] more as referents to the idea [illegible] writing than as written [illegible] eating spoken language.

[illegible] Chase (1985:201), based on [illegible] excavations at Tayasal, has questioned [illegible] assumption that the pictorial pottery [illegible] created for and used by only the elite, [illegible] that this pottery came exclusively [illegible] high-status tombs. The present [illegible] agrees with his questioning of this [illegible] based on the author's earlier [illegible] Reents (n.d.).

[illegible] Cf. Arlen Chase (1985:201); Hansen, Bishop, and Fahsen (1991).

[illegible] Michael Smith (1990:163). [illegible] Smith does not discuss the [illegible] quality of the artistry of Aztec [illegible] wares, it is probable that lesser [illegible] quality painting characterizes the pottery [illegible] in commoners' households.

71. Underscoring the importance of the polychrome pottery to its users is that many vessels were repaired in antiquity. In many cases, these repaired pieces do not represent the highest quality artistry. If the pictorial pottery were intended for [illegible] by the uppermost elite, one would expect these consumers simply to procure another vessel when one was broken. Instead, these repaired vessels may suggest that they were used by people not in a socioeconomic position to command a new piece. Repaired pieces also may suggest social importance attached to the broken vessel such that, even if one could procure a replacement, the broken vessel would hold the same, or more, importance as the new one.

Similar to the pattern of repaired polychrome vessels are those painted pots that later were covered with stucco and embellished with new imagery (cf. Merwin and Vaillant, 1932:Frontispiece). This reuse suggests the same kind of heirloom status noted above for broken vessels and recycled socioritual pottery (pieces with "value-added" status). The stuccoing and repainting of these important pieces also may indicate a change in fashion and possibly even a change in function wherein new imagery was required for the vessel's new contextual use.

72. Julia Hendon, in her work at Copán (Hendon, n.d.), has identified a most interesting statistical correlation between pottery decoration and vessel shape and archaeological context. She notes that bowls, dishes, cylinders and plates were used primarily as containers for food and drink. However, her research demonstrates a strong correlation of fancy bowls and dishes with high-status domestic contexts, in contrast to fancy cylinders and plates that are associated more often with nonsecular ritual contexts in which these vessels were used as containers for the ritual's required food and drink. Her research led her to the following conclusion: "These findings demonstrate that dichotomies such as utilitarian versus ceremonial or domestic versus public con[illegible] that [illegible] of function and social status which should be kept separate. Elaboration may reflect social status even though use remains the same. Given that the elite members of society also eat and sleep and given that differences in social status are often expressed through differences in quality of functionally identical objects, it is unreasonable to continue equating automatically, even if only implicitly, more highly decorated vessels with "public" or "ceremonial" spheres of activity" (Hendon, n.d.:38–39).

73. Fox (1977).

74. This distributional pattern mirrors that of sixteenth-century Utatlan, wherein the products created by the specialized artists attached to the elite households remained in circulation among the elite and not among the commoners (Wallace 1977:9).

75. Also see Ball and Taschek (1991:160) for a similar discussion of the numbers and distribution of polychrome pottery in the archaeological record and the cultural meanings thereof. Those anomalous situations wherein the finest quality painted vessel is found in what appears to be a lower-status environment should be examined carefully because the exceptions to the patterns are indicators of anomalous sociohistorical events. The most famous example is the excavation of the masterfully painted Altar Vase from an otherwise unadorned burial (Adams 1971).

76. Joyce (1991:17–18).

Evidence exists for foreign rule of Tikal after its defeat at the hands of Caracol in AD 562 (Chase and Chase, 1987:60–62; Houston, 1987:95; Schele and Freidel, 1990:171–73, 455).

53. See Stephen Houston (1993) for an in-depth presentation of the inscriptional historical record at Dos Pilas. See Schele and Freidel (1990:26–33) for a basic synopsis of political events during the Classic Period according to the hieroglyphic texts. Although lengthy and impressive, the authors' list certainly will be augmented in the coming years as they and other epigraphers continue to make discoveries of sociopolitical events recorded in the hieroglyphic inscriptions.

Some Mayanists either believe the hieroglyphic historical texts are epiphenominal, and thus have little relevance for "real" Classic Maya history, or that we should not believe these statements by the Maya to represent historical reality because of the human tendency to revise history (see M. Coe, 1992). It is true that any historical account is an interpretation, and that the interpretation may not represent all facets of the reality of the event. However, we should not ignore the hieroglyphic record as a source for historical data if for no other reason than because of the sheer volume of historical events recorded in these texts; there must be at least some truth in them.

54. Nikolai Grube (1992) was the first epigrapher to decipher the hieroglyphic verb for "dance." The question marks in the glyphic transcriptions identify those glyphs that we currently cannot decipher.

55. Sally Price has proposed and discussed this use of art based on her research among the Maroons of Suriname. She notes that art objects are not produced to function within the religious sphere but instead [illegible] to be circulated within the social environment to gain prestige and power (Price, 1984:196). Art functioned among the Maya in similar ways, and more examples of this will be recognized as researchers become sensitized to this functional realm. One notable example is the hieroglyphic brick text at Comalcalco that records Palenque rulers. Peter Mathews explains the presence of this text at Comalcalco as the result of the politically superior Palenque ruler "gifting-down" this artistic record to ruling subsidiaries at Comalcalco (Mathews, 1993:personal communication; also see Schele and Mathews, 1993:132).

56. Other artifactual evidence has been found at Copán that attests to connections between Copan and sites in northern Belize. This is only one of numerous examples of finely painted pottery that was manufactured at a site far from its final resting place in distant elite tombs. Other examples include Tikal (Coggins, n.d.), Altar de Sacrificios (Adams, 1971), Dos Pilas (Houston and Palka, 1992:personal communication), and Buenavista del Cayo (Taschek and Ball, 1992). As more archaeological work is completed, and as more painting styles are defined and their workshop locations determined, the corpus of well-traveled elite vessels will increase dramatically. Joseph Ball and Jennifer Taschek, in their excavations at Buenavista del Cayo, Belize, also are finding foreign, high-status pottery in palace middens. These data suggest that at least some of the finely painted pottery was utilized among the living in sociopolitical and palace-based events as well as in funerary contexts.

57. For example, the painter *Ah Ex Ah Maxam* is the son of Ruler 4 of Naranjo. He painted three of the finest examples of Classic Period polychrome pottery (see Chapter 2, figures 23a and 24). Dave Stuart (1987) first identified the regal genealogical background of this artist (also see Reents, 1987), who independently came to the same conclusion.

58. This ruler has been called "Smoking Squirrel" or "Smoke Squirrel" in the literature. We now are able to identify the constituent glyphs of his name as a fire sign (*k'ak'*) and the head of a tapir (*tz'ul*). Joanne Spero (n.d.) discusses the belief among modern Lacandon Maya that the rain gods (the *Chaces*) ride through the sky on tapirs, and the sounds of their hooves and snorts are the thunder heard during rainstorms. Therefore, the association of fire (lightning and thunder) and tapir may have had supernatural connotations during the Classic Period and would have been an appropriate name for a powerful Classic Period ruler.

59. Rice (1987:267). The author cites the seminal works by Wobst (1977) and Weissner (1984), among others, who have explored the social roles of style in human history.

60. As Prudence Rice points out, "... more complex styles can send more messages and be interpreted on more levels" (Rice, 1987:229).

61. Hyde (1979).

62. After Houston and Taube (1987).

63. The ability to use polychrome pottery to infer sociopolitical rankings is a nascent area within the traditional archaeological usage of pottery. Clearly the road is rife with barriers at this time, but with increasing archaeological work including the recognition of painting styles within the ceramic record, the painted pottery can be used for more than simply chronological indications.

4. The Art of Calligraphy: Image and Meaning

by Barbara MacLeod and Dorie Reents-Budet

Detail S[illegible]

It is surely significant that among the glyphs particularly favored by potters and copied from one pot to another are the monkey, a fish and a bird, glyphs easily recognized by the illiterate.

–J. E. S. Thompson

Classic Maya painted ceramics frequently bear the high art of this great civilization: calligraphy. Combined with the pots' painted images, these texts open a window onto ancient courtly and ritual life, a view unique to the medium of pottery and quite distinct from the domain of the stone monuments and pre-Columbian codices. The subject matter of pottery texts ranges from the repetitive, formulaic Primary Standard Sequence (PSS) to cosmogenesis, magic, the sacred rites of passage and historical narrative. Although highly repetitive, the PSS is pregnant with linguistic, sociopolitical and cultural implications. It serves to communicate the ritual empowerment, surface treatment, proprietary status, function, geographic and social origin, and artistic pedigree of a given vessel, and it identifies the sociopolitical standing of its owner and/or patron.

The Primary Standard Sequence: A Short History of Decipherment

Representations of the Primary Standard Sequence are found on a wide array of vessels, from the most perfectly executed ones signed by a master painter to crude vessels made by unskilled workers. It is evident that persons of the highest status patronized the finest artists and their workshops, and it is also probable that any polychrome vessel, even if poorly painted, conferred some status on its owner. Following this pattern, we find that not every PSS communicates the same kind of owner/patron nominal information; most fall in the midrange between elite and commoner extremes. On the elite side, the PSS records the personal name of the owner/patron and lists his numerous royal titles. Texts on less exalted vessels may be so abbreviated that they only generically specify the owner/patron (cf. figures 4.2a and 4.8).

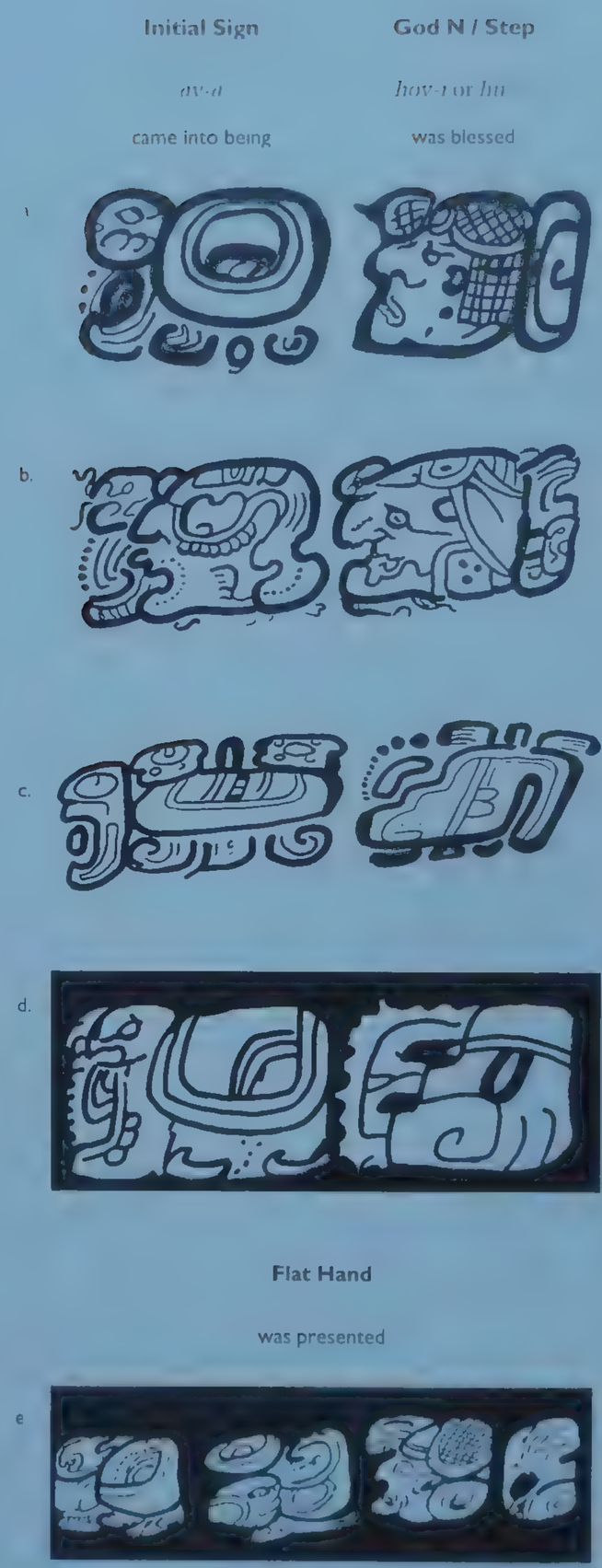
The decipherment of the PSS has led to the inescapable observation that this glyphic formula was developed and elaborated by speakers of the Cholan subfamily of Mayan languages, strengthening the belief that the majority of Classic Period Maya hieroglyphic texts were written in Cholan.[1] Yet the minute variations in the PSS prove enormously useful in refining the ancient linguistic map, substantiating linguists' suggestions that Yucatec Mayan subfamily languages were spoken by peoples living in the Peten lowlands of Guatemala and Belize, and in aiding in the geographic delimitation of the boundaries of interaction between the two lin

The Five Main Sections of the Primary Standard Sequence

Utilizing the patterns of glyphic syntax and substitutions discovered by Coe, it is useful to subdivide the PSS into five sections, each of which deals with different aspects of its message.[6] These five sections are Presentation, Surface Treatment, Vessel Type, Contents and Closure.

The Presentation Section

The Presentation section consists of Initial Sign, Flat Hand and God N (or Step), which together convey information about the dedication and presentation of the vessel (Figure 4.1a–e). Initial Sign and its variants always open the Presentation section, and there is no example of a whole PSS without this glyph. Of the three glyphs that comprise the Presentation section, however, only God N/Step (*hoy-i/huy-i* ["was blessed"]) satisfactorily has been deciphered.[7] In this chapter, words in bold type represent syllabic decipherments and logographic readings of glyphs; words in italics are reconstructed Mayan readings. These two categories must be distinguished in order to keep separate the syllabic decipherments or readings from the reconstructed Mayan phrases.



4.1

The Presentation section of the PSS, consisting of Initial Sign, Flat Hand and God N (or Step). (Unless otherwise indicated, all drawings in this chapter are by Barbara MacLeod.)

a. from MS1302 (Initial Sign, God N). *Also see catalog 90*

b. from MS1416 (Initial Sign, God N). *Also see catalog 95*

c. from MS0040 (Initial Sign, Step). *Also see catalog 23*

d. from K2796 (Initial Sign, Step).

e. from MS1122 (Initial Sign, Flat Hand, God N).

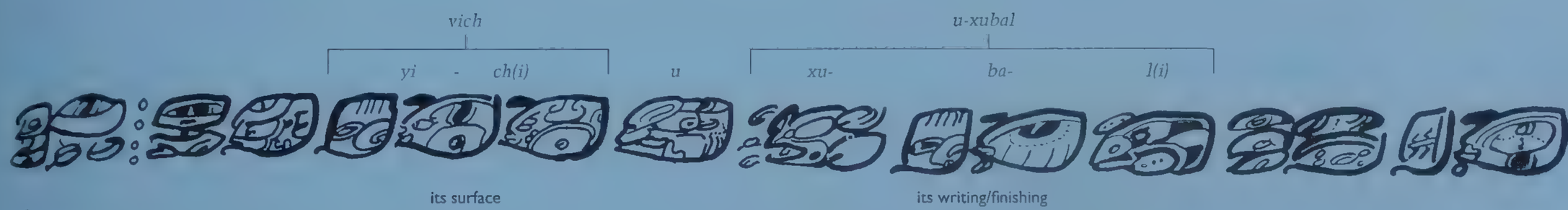
guistic groups.[2] These glyphic variations also may reflect an individual painter's creativity, or "idiolect," which too may be geographically sensitive.

It is the repetitive nature of the Primary Standard Sequence that first attracted the attention of scholars. During the early 1970s, when significant breakthroughs were being made in understanding Maya hieroglyphic writing, Michael Coe undertook a detailed structural and thematic analysis of the images painted on Maya pottery and the recurrent hieroglyphic text, which he named the Primary Standard Sequence.[3] Coe established the syntax of the PSS and its predictable variations. To him, this formal structure suggested a "phatic mantra," an incantation guiding the deceased through the nether reaches of the underworld. This interpretation was compelling when considered in tandem with Coe's discovery that many of the painted scenes depict the Hero Twins' trials in the underworld and other tales found in the Classic Maya epic myth the *Popol Vuh*.[4]

Coe identified thirty-five glyphs comprising the PSS, with text length ranging from four to twenty-two glyphs reflecting underlying rules of sequencing and substitution. The first part of the PSS is characterized by little variation. The second part exhibits greater variability, now known to reflect the predictable but optional components of generalized nominals versus the unique names and titles of specific historical owners/patrons recorded in this part.

The research of the 1980s and early 1990s has established the phonetic nature of the PSS first proposed in the early 1950s.[5] Although Coe was an early advocate of phoneticism, he did not initially consider the PSS as phonetic because of its frequent, elaborate, and often unique renditions of individual glyphs in which the artists painted head variant forms of the glyphs (see below MS1126) rather than their more usual and visually simplistic geometric versions. The phatic mantra interpretation of the PSS has now been superseded by a radically different interpretation based on the linguistic decipherment of this repetitive text.

b



c

Flat Hand occasionally intervenes between Initial Sign and God N (Figure 4.1e). The following nouns in the PSS such as "surface" and "writing" receive the action of Flat Hand (as the subjects of a passive verb), which strongly suggests a verbal role for this glyph.[8] Elsewhere in the hieroglyphic corpus, Flat Hand is the action done to the headdress of the ruler at his accession. It also is what is done to the **tun** ("stone") during Period Ending rituals which is a likely reference to the placing or presentation of a stela, many of whose texts dedicate the Tun Ending. At Chichén Itzá, the lintel of the ruler (*u-pakab* ["his lintel"]) receives the Flat Hand action at its dedication. These contexts suggest a meaning of "present" or "reveal" for Flat Hand, referring to the ritual appearance, presentation or placement of objects, including the painted vessel.[9] In the PSS, then, the complete Presentation section would read "[It] came into being, was presented, was blessed . . ."

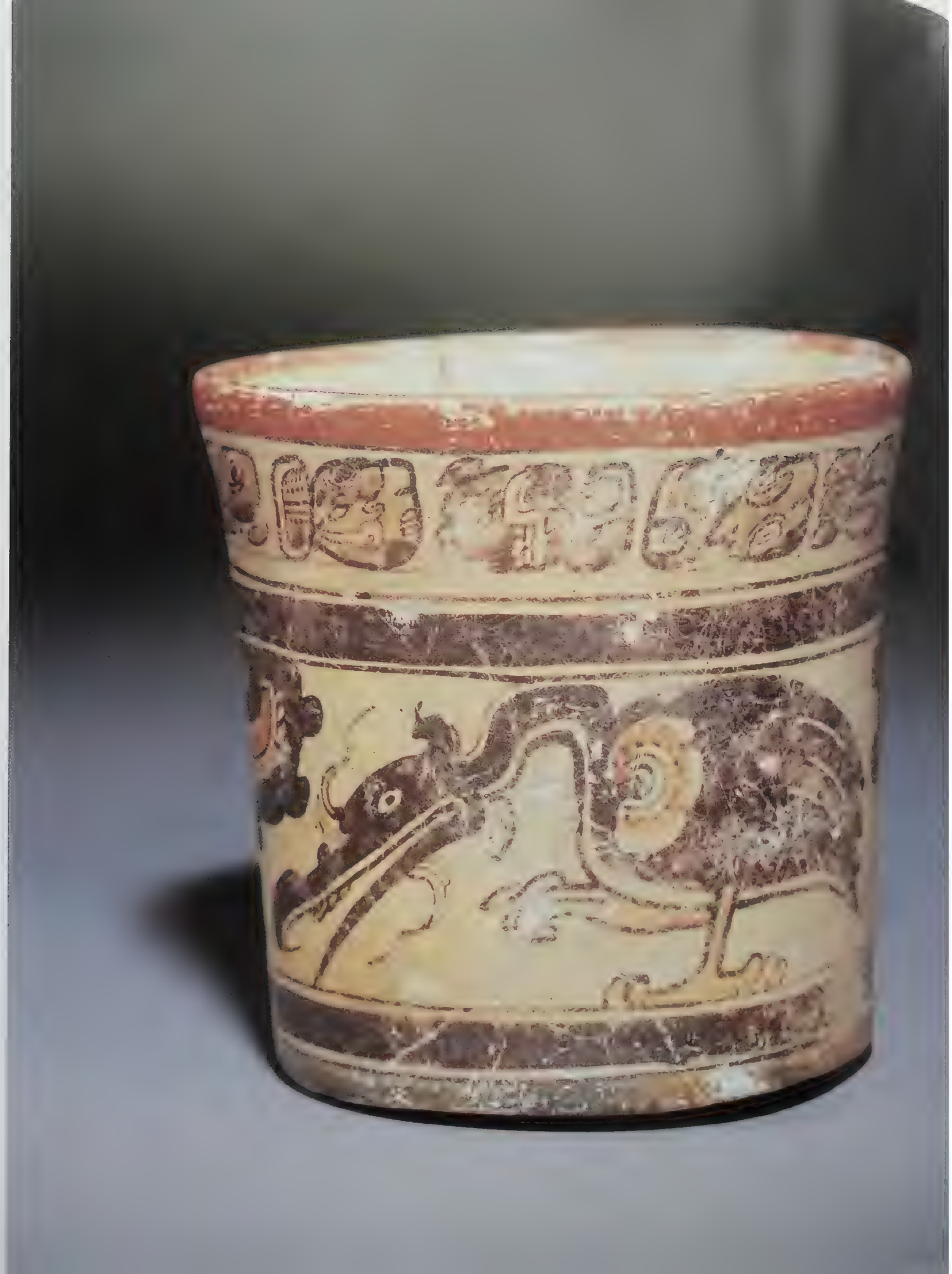
4.2

The Surface Treatment section of the PSS, consisting of *tsib-waha hich* or its variant *-ich u-xu...*

a. MS1137. A Codex-style vase with the Surface Treatment phrase typical of the style

b. MS1137 (drawing by D. Reents-Budet). *Also see catalog 22.*

c. MS0054. *Also see catalog 72.*



his drinking vessel

u-lak

his plate

The Surface Treatment Section

The second section is termed Surface Treatment, and its constituent glyphs are Fire Quincunx (*ts'ib* ["write/paint"]) plus its verbal suffixes (*bal, naha* or *nahal*) (figures 4.2b, c), or **lu**-Bat (meaning "carve," found only on carved or incised vessels) and Manik Hand (*yich* or *hich* "[its] surface").[10] In addition, there is another Bat glyph (followed by glyphs reading *bal*), which must have a similar meaning to "write" or "paint" because it replaces Fire Quincunx on particular styles of pottery (MS1444; Figure 4.3). However, this variation is not yet well understood linguistically. The optional Manik Hand glyph has two distinct forms; *yich* or *hich*, the former preceding it and the latter following Fire Quincunx (*ts'ib* ["writing/painting"]) (figures 4.2b, c).[11] The Surface Treatment section reads "was painted (or carved), the surface of . . . ," or "was painted (carved) . . . ," or in some cases "(was blessed) the surface for its writing . . ."

4.3 MS1444

The Surface Treatment section's alternative "Bat" glyph (*yich u-xubal*, meaning "its writing (finishing?)."

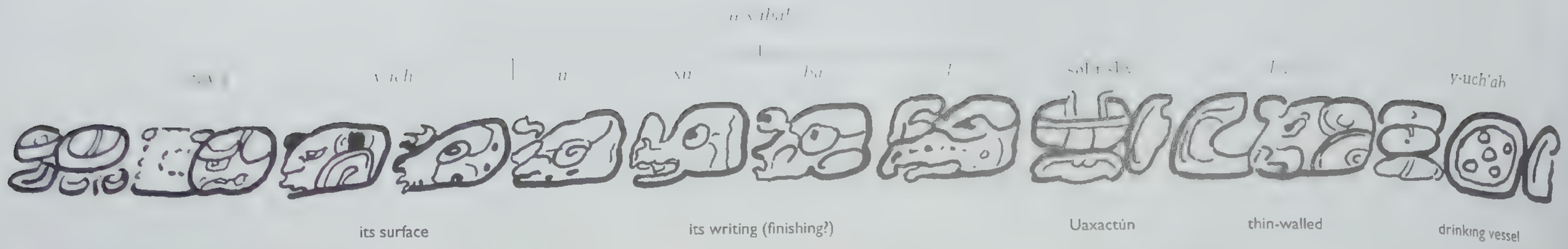
4.4 MS1520

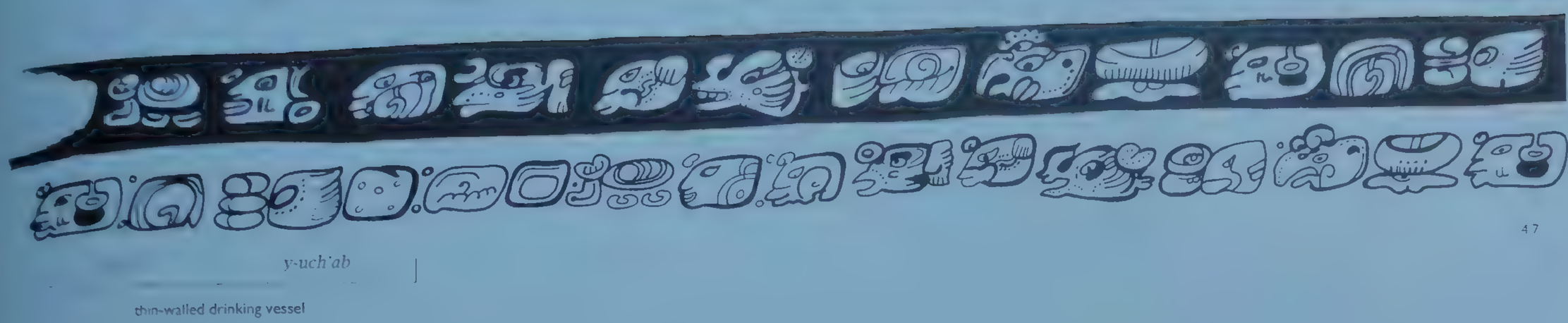
The Vessel Type section; *y-uch'ab* ("his drinking vessel").

4.5 MS0647

The Vessel Type section; *u-lak* ("his plate")

Also see catalog 20


u-xlha'l
y-uch'ah
u
xu
ha
l
y-uch'ah
its surface
its writing (finishing?)
Uaxactún
thin-walled
drinking vessel



The Vessel Type Section

The third section, termed Vessel Type, simply specifies the form class to which the vessel belongs. The form class is always designated as a possessed object. Here we find Wing Quincunx (*y-uch'ab* ["his/her drinking vessel"]) (Figure 4.4),[12] Inverted Ahau (*u-lak* "his plate") (Figure 4.5), or *u-hawte'* (his tripod plate) (Figure 4.6).[13] Sometimes a glyph reading *u-hay* precedes Wing Quincunx (*y-uch'ab* ["his vase"]) (cf. MS0194; Figure 4.7). *Hay* is an adjective meaning "thin" and could refer to the thinning process employed by potters while building the vessel. In the PSS, however, *hay* is a noun and either qualifies the nature of the vase's walls (a thin-walled vessel) or refers to a particular type of container (*hayal* ["basin"], as is found in modern Tzotzil, a Mayan language of the Chiapas highlands).[14] Combining these first three sections, then, the opening of a typical PSS translates as "(Initial Sign), was blessed, was painted, its surface, his plate (or tripod plate, drinking vessel, thin-walled drinking vessel, basin)."[15]

The Contents Section

The Contents section follows and records the intended contents of the vessel, which in turn are correlated with vessel shape (e.g., liquids with cylindrically shaped vessels, semisolid foods with bowls and solid foods with plates). The most common content is *kakaw* (Coe's Fish Sign, which reads **ka-ka-wa**, that is, chocolate). The *kakaw* glyph is often preceded by Serpent Segment (*ta* [or *ti*] *y-utal* ["for food of . . ."]), the Vessel Type and Contents phrase reading *y-uch'ab ta y-utal kakaw*, or "his drinking vessel for his cacao food (sustenance)" (Figure 4.8). Because of the cylindrical shape of the vessels on which we find this phrase, we may assume that *y-utal kakaw* was a liquid food, that is, a drink made from various preparations of cacao. Ethnohistoric and

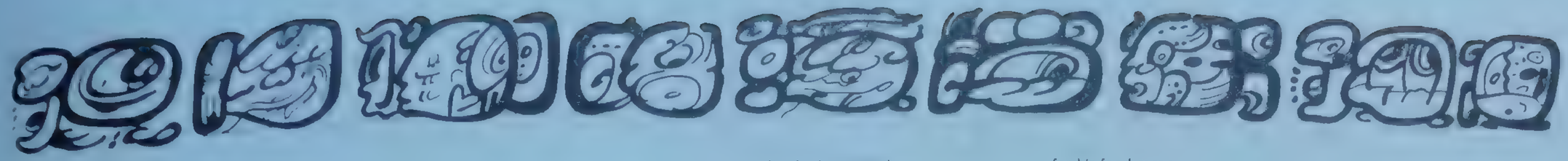
4.6 MS1421

The Vessel Type section; *u-hawte'* ("his tripod plate").

4.7 MS0194 (*opposite and above*)

The Vessel Type section; *hay y-uch'ab* ("thin-walled drinking vessel") (drawing by D. Reents-Budet). *Also see catalog 24.*

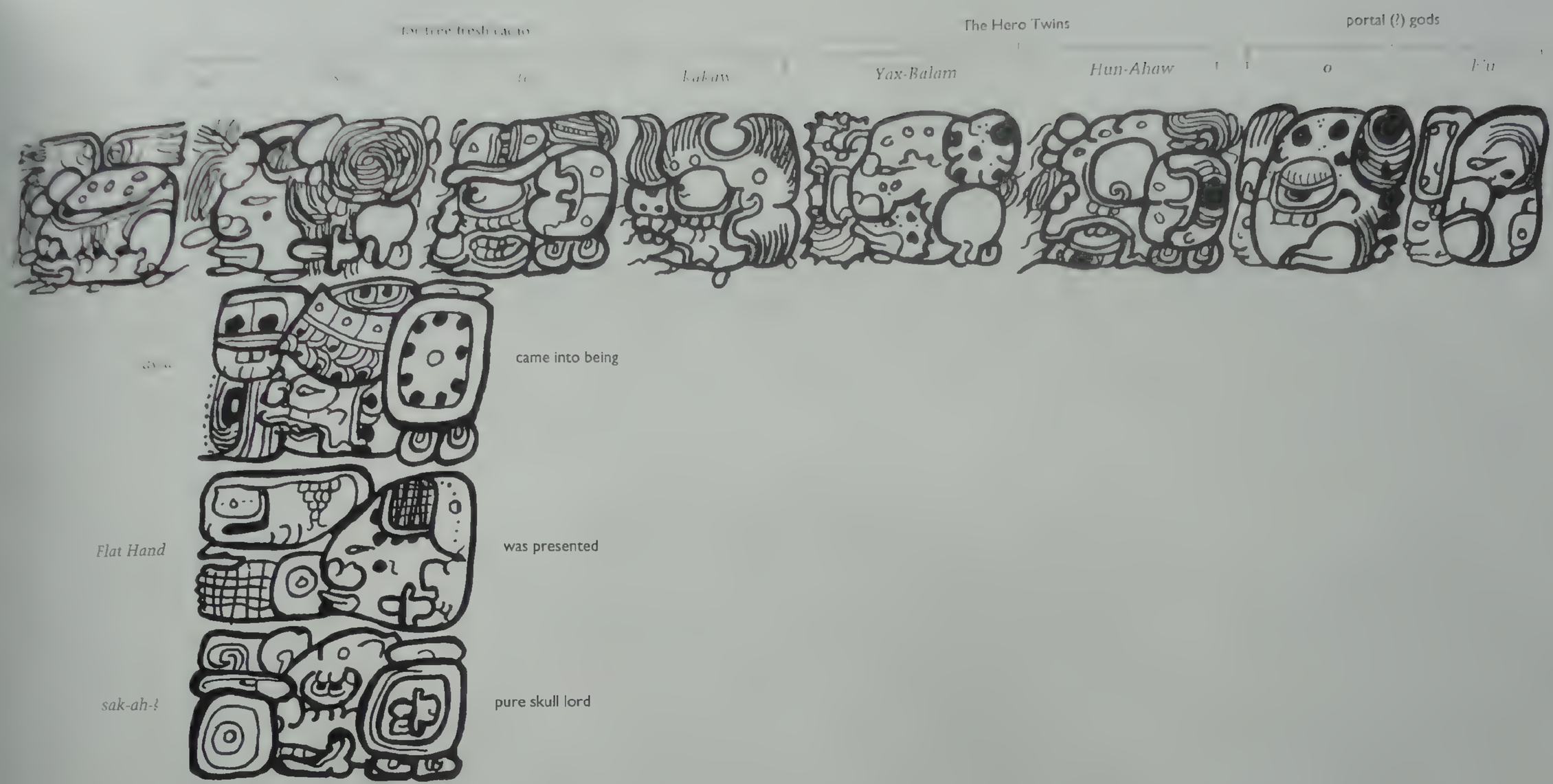
4.6



his drinking vessel for his food cacao

4.8 MSO151

The Contents section; *y-uch'ab ti y-utal kakaw* ("his drinking vessel for his cacao food [or sustenance]") (drawing by D. Reents-Budet).



tent section lists *ul* as the contained food almost exclusively are painted on bowls rather than on tall cylindrical vases, a logical vessel shape to hold food of this consistency. Contents are rarely, if ever, mentioned for plates. However, when plates are illustrated in pictorial scenes, they contain solid foods that closely resemble *wah* ("maize bread") or tamales (Figure 4.11).[18] Adding this Contents Section, then, we have an ideal PSS, which reads "(Initial Sign), was blessed, was painted, its surface, her vase for her fresh cacao food."

4.9 MS1126

The Contents section; *tsih te' kakaw* ("his [their] drinking vessel for tree-fresh cacao"). *Also see catalog 88.*

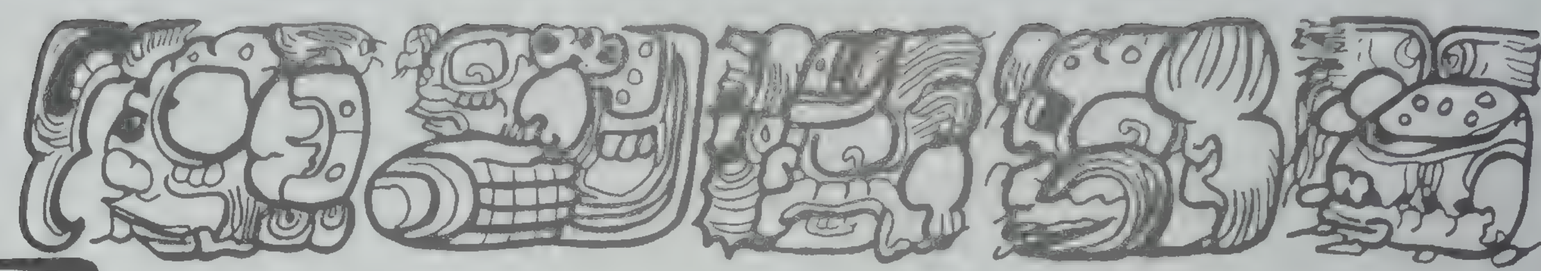
came into being

was presented

its surface

their drinking vessel

y-uch'ah



came into being

Flat Hand

was presented

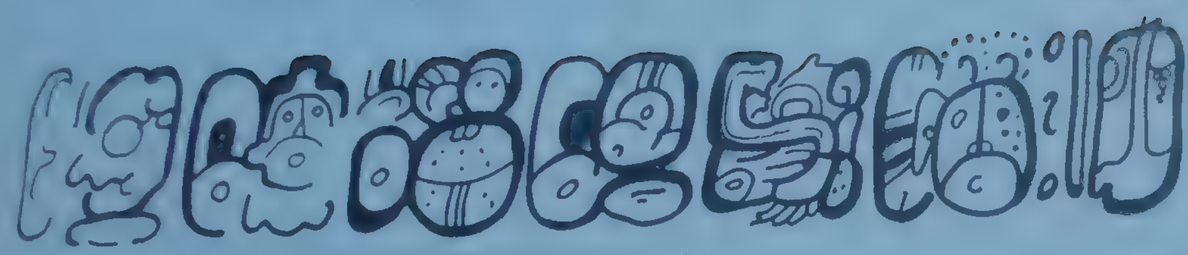
a-nal

maize lord

ethnographic sources document the widespread ritual and social consumption of different kinds of cacao-based drinks among the peoples of Mesoamerica (see Chapter 3).

One of these preparations is *tsih te'el kakaw* (see MS1126, which has an abbreviated form: *tsih te' kakaw*; Figure 4.9). *Tsih* in Cholan means "fresh, new," and *te'* is "tree," the phrase reading "tree-fresh cacao." It is quite possible that this refers to the sweet white pulp of the unripe pod, which in flavor and texture is much like the tropical fruits soursop and custard apple.[16] Other evidence suggests *tsih* or *tsih te'el* refers to the youthful Cacao God, suggesting that this chocolate-based beverage was deified or personified.[17] Other qualifiers, such as *k'an* ("ripe"), may also precede *kakaw*.

Other vessels' contents include atole (*sa'* or *ul*; Figure 4.10). Atole was a common food in pre-Columbian times and survives today as a staple in the Maya diet. It is prepared from cooked corn mixed with water, varying in consistency from a grainy liquid to a gruel, and often is sweetened with honey or sugar. PSS phrases whose con-

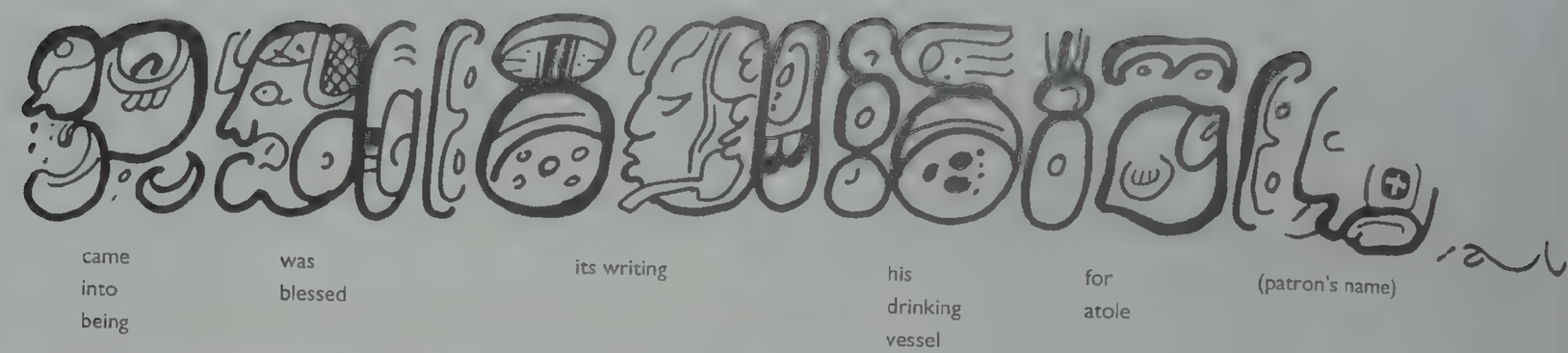


black flower of the adorned "black-zero" place ? first true spirit 7-gourd

[entrance to the underworld]"). This explicit titular phrase strongly suggests a deceased status for the vessel's owner/patron and his postmortem journey into the Maya underworld.

Not surprisingly, the personalized names and titles found in the Closure section vary widely (cf. figures 4.6, 4.10, 4.12 and 4.13). These may include the various religious and political titles carried by the vessel's owner/patron in life, many of which also are found on the stone monuments that record the historical details of the person's life. These nominal phrases also can include an emblem glyph, which specifies the person's political affiliation (figures 4.12 and 4.13). Infrequently, the Closure section includes the name of the artist who painted the vase, sometimes identifying him as an *its'at* ("artist") or *chehen* ("doer/maker") (Figure 4.13).[20]

The PSS usually is conveyed as a single grammatical sentence whose pivot is the pottery vessel itself. The PSS tells of the presentation and dedication of the vessel and of the painting of its surface, which makes it ritually blessed or proper. The PSS also records the form class to which the vessel belongs and what kind of food (or other substance) it contained. Last, the PSS preserves the names and titles of the vessel's owner or patron, sometimes stating that he or she is deceased. It is important to note that this information does not vary with the imagery painted on the pot. In fact, the imagery can be considered of secondary importance because, on some vessels, only the PSS is present with no accompanying scene. Further, in only a few rare instances do the PSS and the pictorial scene begin at the same place in the overall pictorial program; usually each has its own starting point. These characteristics strongly suggest that the pictorial images and the PSS text are independent artistic and conceptual units with separate semantic and informational domains.



4.10 MS1396

The Contents section; *y-uch'ab ti ul* ("his drinking vessel for atole") (drawing by D. Reents-Budet).

4.11 MS0651

Detail of tripod plate depicted in palace scene, the plate containing a solid food that closely resembles *wah* ("maize bread") or tamales. *Also see catalog 12.*

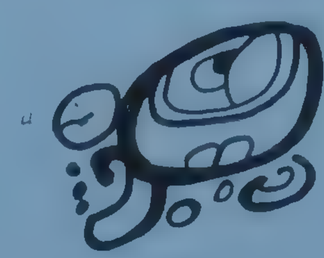
The Closure Section

The fifth and last section, termed Closure, is divisible into two parts; common descriptive epithets and the personal names and titles of an individual. Often these two parts co-occur, the generic terms preceding the specific and personalized ones. Among the generic epithets, Coe's Rodent Bone and Hand Monkey glyphs often are found together, although sometimes Hand Monkey is deleted (Figure 4.12). Rodent Bone reads *chak ch'ok* or *bak ch'ok* ("great lineage member" or "'bone' lineage member"). Hand Monkey is transcribed as *kelem* and also refers to "youth."[19] A poorly understood glyph reading *ah lats* may also appear alone or after Hand Monkey (Figure 4.13). *Ah* is a prefix meaning "he/she of." *Lats* means "stack long objects" in modern Chol Mayan. In Yucatec Mayan we have a similar word *ts'ak* which means both "stack" and "generation." Using this as an analogy, we may infer that *lats* had a meaning of "generation" during the Classic Period, as suggested by Dr. Lida G. Woodbury (1993:personal communication), a participant in the Second Annual Maya Hieroglyphic Workshop at Duke University.

Characteristic of Codex-style pottery is its generic Closure section, which frequently includes the Chuen-uinal phrase (Figure 4.2b). This glyph compound reads *k'ul chahtan winik* ("sacred person of the dark place") and very likely designates the owner/patron of the vase as deceased. Sometimes this is followed by *sak ol way* ("pure *nagual* [spirit companion] of the portal

Linguistic, Semantic and Conceptual Contents of the Primary Standard Sequence: A Closer Scrutiny

We know that the ancient Maya scribal artist intended to convey very specific information about a given vessel and its social identity and function, and that he had limited freedom of expression within the confines of the PSS. When vases were mass-produced, such as the Codex-style pots, their PSS phrases tended to be very similar in content, especially in the nominal Closure section. On the other hand, when a vase was commissioned by an elite patron from a prestigious workshop, and sometimes from a known artist, the master painter consciously created a PSS of great length and visual and



4.13 MS1446 (*above*)

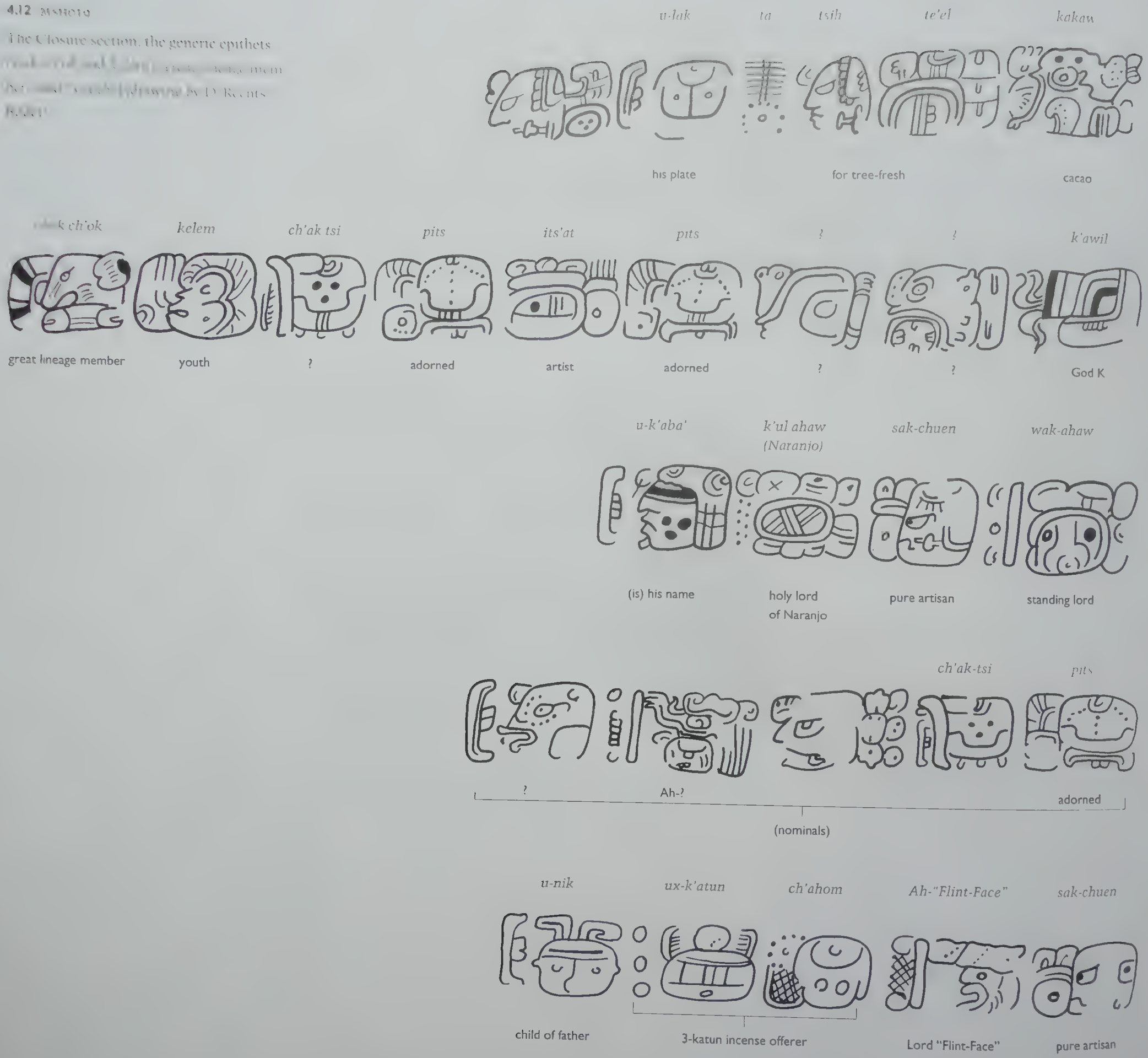
The Closure section; the appellative *ah lats* may refer to familial generations.

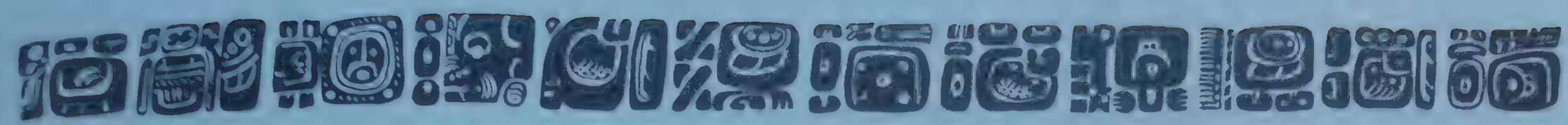
4.14 (*left*)

Initial Signs, including one with a mirror mainsign (from MS1132), one with a GI head mainsign (from MS1126) and one with the Loincloth Apron God (from MS1[illegible])

4.12 MS1010

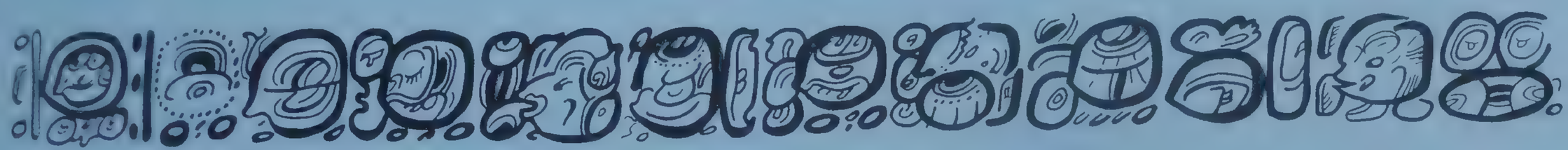
The Closure section, the generic epithets [illegible] (drawing by D. Reents-Budet)





his incising/finishing

huwi-ʔ *y-uch naab* *u-tsih* *te el* *kakaw*



his drinking vessel for tree-fresh cacao

building and throne dedications on the carved stone monuments. The related concepts of "bless," "dedicate," and "use for the first time" are entirely proper here.[24]

Surface Treatment

As noted above, the **lu**-Bat glyph must mean "carve" because it replaces *ts'ib* ("write/paint") on incised vessels (Figure 4.16). We believe this glyph reads **yu(l)xul**: **y-ul-xul* ("his incising-and-finishing"). MacLeod has reconstructed **ul* ("incise") for ancient Cholan, based on modern Chorti and Tzotzil words meaning "skewer" and "engrave." **Y-ul* would have been the ancient possessed form, and *xul* means "finish." Burnishing and engraving (or engraving and finishing) constitute the artistic process for creating a carved pot.

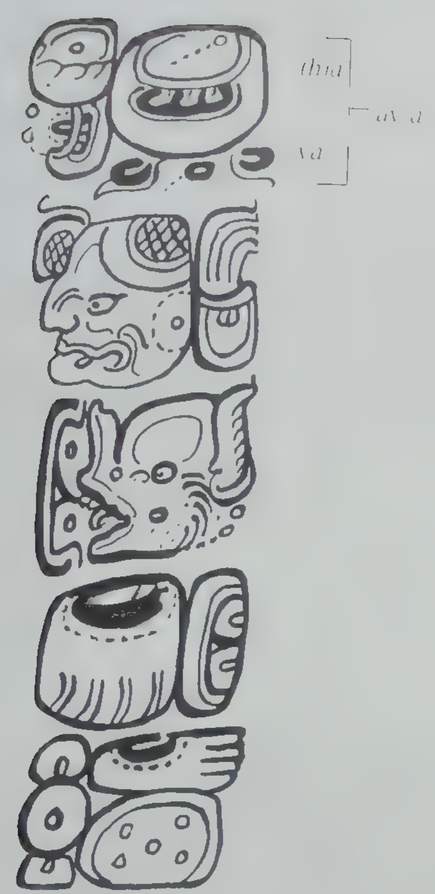
The same bat head, but without **lu**, replaces *ts'ib* ("write") on painted pots coming from specific regions such as Uaxactún and El Zotz', located in the central area of the Petén lowlands (figures 4.3 and 4.7). These may read **u-xubal* or **u-xubal(ʔ)-tal*. Because of this substitution pattern, it is reasonable that this bat head glyph has the same general meaning as *ts'ib* ("write"). However, no "writing" or "painting" words beginning with *xu-* or *xo-* are found in any of the Mayan dictionaries. It is possible that *xul* ("finish") is the target root word, implying that the ancient Maya considered the painting of the vase the finishing activity for creating a proper vessel.[25]

4.16

The **lu**-Bat glyph probably means "carve" because it replaces *ts'ib* ("write/paint") on incised vessels such as this one from Yucatan, Mexico. The verb probably reads *y-ul xul* ("his incising-and-finishing") (drawing by D. Reents-Budet).

4.17 MS1373

An alternative "drinking vessel" glyph reads either *y-uch'-nab* or *y-uch'-ha'[-ab]* and substitutes for *y-uch'ab* on vases from the *Ik* site and its environs (drawing by D. Reents



4.15 MS1118

Here the Initial Sign is spelled phonetically **a-(h)a-ya**, making a strong case for the reading *ay-a* ("came into being"). *Also see catalog 73.*

linguistic complexity. The artist's and/or workshop's creative style permeates the final work, the PSS being an integral part of the style. Not surprisingly, we find consistent choices of phrases and particular glyphs, and renderings thereof, associated with the different painting styles. These patterns are geographically specific and represent the artists exercising poetic license to distinguish their works both visually and linguistically.

There is another level of equally rich and diverse information in the PSS, however, which surely did not result from conscious design. The artist created a text in his native language that met the semantic requirements of the PSS genre, but he probably did not imagine that future scholars would ever collect such texts for linguistic comparison. These comparisons of hundreds of PSS texts, painted on pots whose geographic origins can now be established, demonstrate that different dialects, and possibly different languages, may be represented. The grammatical integrity of the PSS allows a precise correlation of glyphic affix patterns and syntactic variation with corresponding structures in modern Mayan languages. In some cases, these texts have permitted the reconstruction of ancient words now lost from modern Mayan languages. A few of these examples are discussed below.

The Function and Possible Meaning of "Initial Sign"

The usual Initial Sign has long been regarded as representing a mirror, although the heads of the deity "GI" and the "Loincloth Apron God" substitute for the more usual mirror sign (Figure 4.14). Regardless of which mainsign is present, its flanking affixes are consistently a prefixed **a** and a suffixed **ya**. There are several other signs that substitute for the mirror in this hieroglyph, notably the heads of the god GI and the Loincloth Apron God who is the personification of the mirror.[21] Although a reading of **tsu** and/or **tsuk** has been suggested, Initial Sign's flanking affixes (**a** and **ya**) suggest the reading ay or **aya**.[22] *Ay-a* in ancient Cholan means "existed" or "came to pass/exist." Supporting this interpretation are the examples of Initial Sign on the stone monuments where it is found in calendrical contexts and here can be replaced by a glyph reading *uti* ("happened"). On the so-called Nebaj-style vases from the southern highlands of Guatemala (Figure 4.15), Initial Sign has a telling variant which reads *a-(h)a-ya*, making a strong case for the reading *ay-a* ("[it] came into being").

The God N and Step Substitution Set

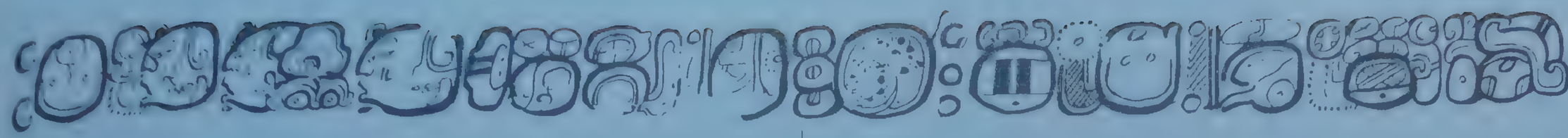
The close relationship between the God N (*hoy/huy* ["bless"]) and Step hieroglyphs suggests that they must be equivalent or very similar in meaning. Step always has the syllabic prefix **hu**.[23] Only rarely does this affix appear with the God N head. If **hoy* ("bless") were a proto–Cholan-Tzeltalan word in addition to being a Yucatecan word, it should have become **huy* in ancient Cholan (asterisks identify reconstructed ancient words). Because **huy* does not survive in any Cholan language, it may have existed in Classic times as a freely available alternative to **hoy*.

It is possible that the Step glyph (figure 4.1c and 4.1d), which represents a house platform with its entrance stairway, reads **yi(b)**; **yib* may have meant "base" in ancient Cholan. The God N/Step set appears not only in the PSS on pottery but also as the verb for

4.18 MS0658

a. The PSS on this plate with shallow sides records its vessel type as a *y-uch'ab ta y-utal kakaw* | his drinking vessel for his cacao food | |

b. Drawing of hieroglyphic text on MS0658.



(artist's mother; a holy lady from Yaxhá)

(artist's father; a holy lord of Naranjo)

hov-i *y-uch'ab* *ta tsih* *te'el* *kakaw* *K'ak'-Til* *chan k'awil* *kul-ahaw (Naranjo)* *sak-Chuen* *6-kab na*

came into being, was blessed, his drinking vessel for tree-fresh cacao, Fire-tapir sky-God K, holy lord of Naranjo, pure artisan place of the upright one

family and sometimes a *sahal*, or ruler of a secondary lineage or site). The painted pottery, on the other hand, had a wider distribution within Maya culture, and many patrons certainly were lower-tiered elites who were able to commission a high-status vessel but who were not in a sociopolitical position to appear in the monumental stone epigraphic record. Such is probably the case with the patron of MS1421 and the majority of painted vases whose PSS phrases end with nominal phrases of otherwise unrecorded persons.

Occasionally, however, the same person's name is found on the stone monuments and recorded in a ceramic text. The exceptionally long Closure phrase on MS1375 records the name of the owner/patron of the vase and his various titles (*Ah-"Flint-Face" ba-ahaw*), and those of the artist and his parentage (Figure 4.20). The owner/patron shares the same name as the contemporary Naranjo ruler Lord "Flint-Face." The artist's parents are this ruler and the royal Lady of Yaxhá, both of whose names appear on numerous stone monuments from Naranjo. The owner of the vase may not have been the ruler Lord "Flint-Face" himself, but he is recorded as a deceased member of the family of the king.[30]

MSH019 has a similarly long owner's nominal phrase, which includes the Naranjo emblem glyph and the **sak-Chuen** (or "pure artisan") title associated with the ruling family of Naranjo (Figure 4.12). This owner also

4.21 MS1416

The Buenavista Vase's PSS text states that the vessel's owner/patron is *K'ak'-Til chan k'awil k'ul ahaw* of Naranjo (Fire-Tapir, sky God K, holy lord of Naranjo), the famous early eighth-century A.D. king of Naranjo previously known as Smoke-Squirrel. *Also see catalog 95.*

4.20 MS1375

This long Closure phrase begins with the name of the owner of the vase (*Ah-"Flint-Face" ba-ahaw*) and continues with the names of the artist and his royal parentage. *Also see catalog 10*

interesting anomaly in the ancient system of vessel nomenclature (Figure 4.18a, b). This vessel is unequivocally a plate with shallow sides, although its hieroglyphic text calls it a *y-uch'ab* ("his drinking vessel") *ta y-utal kakaw* ("for his cacao food"). A related anomaly is found on a plate excavated from Holmul (Figure 4.12). Here we find the phrase *u-lak ta tsih te'el kakaw* ("his plate for tree-fresh cacao"), which is a vessel contents phrase usually found on cylinder vases containing the drink made from the processed pulp of the cacao fruit. A possible explanation for this seeming anomaly is that this plate held the unprocessed cacao pulp, which could have been eaten with the fingers much like we eat fruit slices.

A recent discovery has found another vessel type name, *tsimal hay* (Figure 4.19). *Tsimal* (represented glyphically as **tsi-ma-li**) is cognate with *tsima* ("drinking gourd") in Chol, and *hay* means "a type of gourd" in Tzotzil. Perhaps these terms from the natural world are linguistic anachronisms from the preceramic days of the Mayas' ancestors, who used gourds as their primary food service vessels.[28] It also is conceivable that these terms were borrowed by Maya potters who created clay objects using halved gourds as molds.

Moving from vessel terminology to contents, on MS1396 we find the phrase *y-uch'ab ti ul* ("his drinking vessel for atole") (Figure 4.10). *Ul* ("atole") is Cholan, but the preposition *ti* is Yucatecan (the Cholan preposition is *ta*). This *ti* is a glyphic and linguistic marker for vessels painted in this style and made in workshops located in the eastern Peten of Guatemala. Its presence suggests that the artist created this text in his native Cholan language, but that his Cholan may have been a dialect in contact with Yucatecan speakers who had borrowed the Yucatecan *ti*. This kind of substitution is documented in the now-extinct language Cholti, a Cholan language, which had prepositional *ti*. Speakers of Cholti lived in the southeastern Peten.

The Closure Phrase: Historical Owners, Patrons and Artists

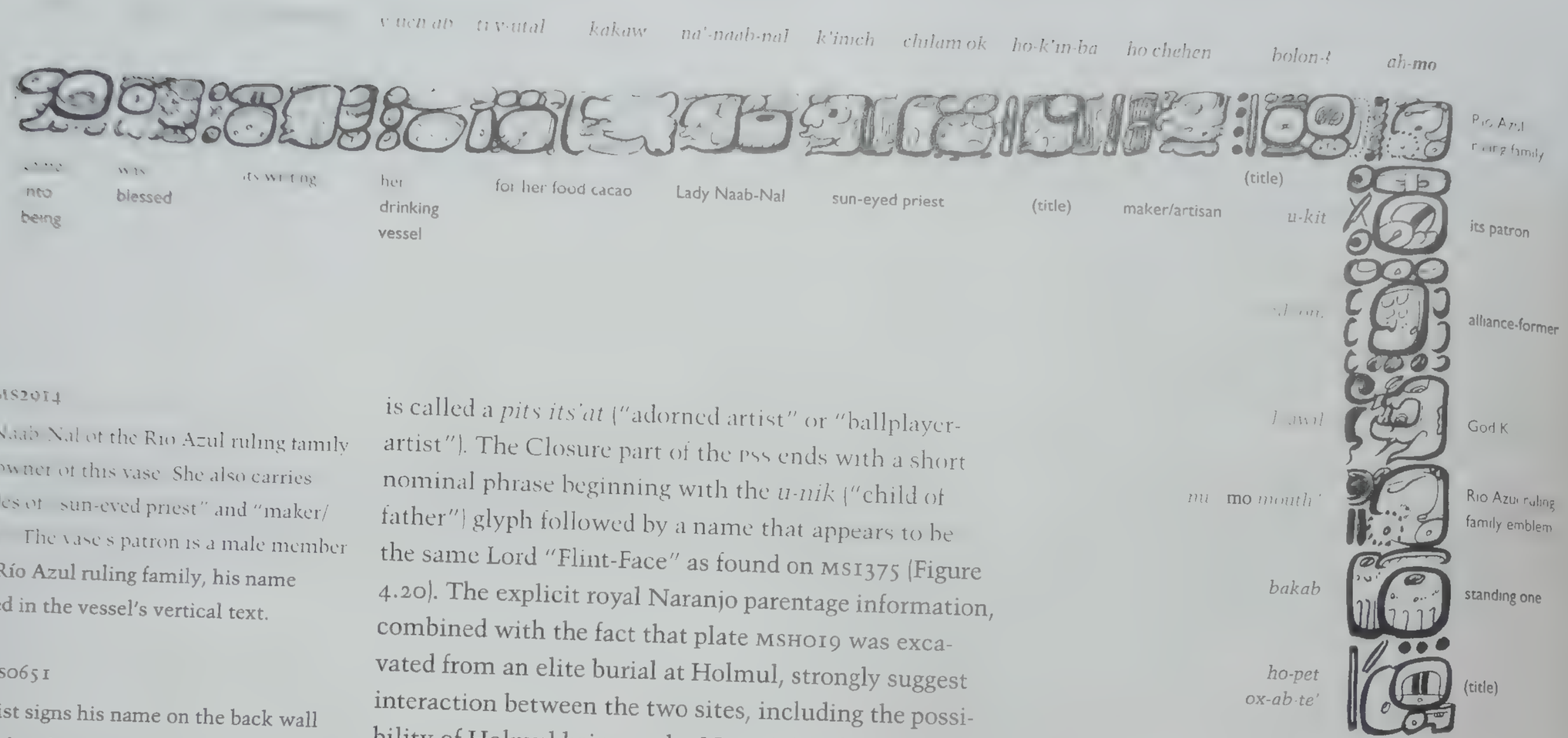
The Closure section of the PSS contains the names of historical individuals, and, in many instances, these are the only surviving records of these peoples' names and descriptive epithets. For example, the name phrase on MS1421 is comprised of unique nominal elements not found on any stone monument (Figure 4.6). This is not unexpected because the stone monuments are records of only the uppermost ruling elite (the king, his immediate

4.23

u-nik their flowers

k'inich sun-eyed

ch'ok lineage member



4.22 MS2914

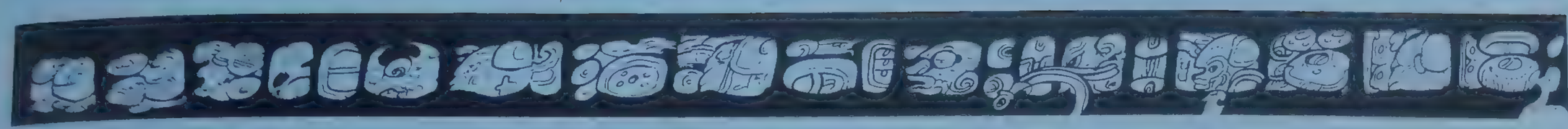
Lady Naab-Nal of the Río Azul ruling family is the owner of this vase. She also carries the titles of "sun-eyed priest" and "maker/artisan." The vase's patron is a male member of the Río Azul ruling family, his name recorded in the vessel's vertical text.

4.23 MS0651

The artist signs his name on the back wall of the palace behind the enthroned ruler. *Also see catalog 12.*

is called a *pits its'at* ("adorned artist" or "ballplayer-artist"). The Closure part of the PSS ends with a short nominal phrase beginning with the *u-nik* ("child of father") glyph followed by a name that appears to be the same Lord "Flint-Face" as found on MS1375 (Figure 4.20). The explicit royal Naranjo parentage information, combined with the fact that plate MSH019 was excavated from an elite burial at Holmul, strongly suggest interaction between the two sites, including the possibility of Holmul being under Naranjo's political sway during the late eighth to early ninth centuries A.D., when this plate was created. A similar scenario can be suggested for MS1416, an extraordinary vase excavated from an elite tomb at Buenavista, Belize (Figure 4.21; also see Chapter 7). The short PSS text painted around the rim of this vessel specifies that its cacao food contents belonged to *K'ak'-Til chan k'awil, k'ul ahaw* of Naranjo. This *ahaw* is none other than the famous early eighth-century A.D. king of Naranjo, erroneously called Smoke-Squirrel and now known as *K'ak'-Til* or *Buts'-Til* ("Fire-Tapir" or "Smoke-Tapir").

In most cases, the PSS does not make a distinction between owner and patron, and thus the question remains open as to whether these are one and the same person. In those cases where the owner/patron is specified as deceased, the practicality of production suggests that the piece was commissioned at an earlier date in anticipation of death. In a few rare cases, the PSS does distinguish between patron and owner. For example, the vase K2914 records its owner as *na'-naab-nal k'inich chilam ho-k'in-ba chehen*, or "Lady Naab-Nal of the Río Azul ruling family" (Figure 4.22).[31] This female owner from the Río Azul royalty is noted as being a "sun-eyed priest" (*k'inich chilam*) and a "doer/maker" (*chehen*). The vase's vertical text records the name of the patron who commissioned the vase: *u kit yuk-om k'awil, nu-*"**mo-**mouth" *bakab ho-pet ox ab-te'* ("its patron alliance-former God K (of the) Río Azul ruling family (or emblem glyph), *bakab*, (title)").



implies that the "knowledge and painting" is a reference to the inspiration for the elaborately painted scene as coming from the vase's owner.[35]

A recent discovery points to either the existence of a potter's signature paralleling that of the painters or possibly a practice for naming pottery workshops. The texts on the stylistically similar vessels MS1398, MS1445 and MS1446 include the phrase *u-yul, u-kun* (figures 4.26, 4.27 and 4.13). Entries for *yul* in the Yucatecan Cordemex dictionary suggest a meaning of "work" or "craft." *Kun* means "center," "station," or "seat" and may refer to the center of production, that is, the workshop. Noting the pancultural pattern of naming a workshop for its master artist, perhaps here among the Maya we have the same use of the master's appellative to name the workshop (*u-yul, u-kun* [name], meaning "his craft, his station" [master's and workshop's name]).[36] The Classic Maya named important buildings and sections of their towns, and even the stelae had proper names. Consonant with this pattern would be appellations for elite pottery workshops.

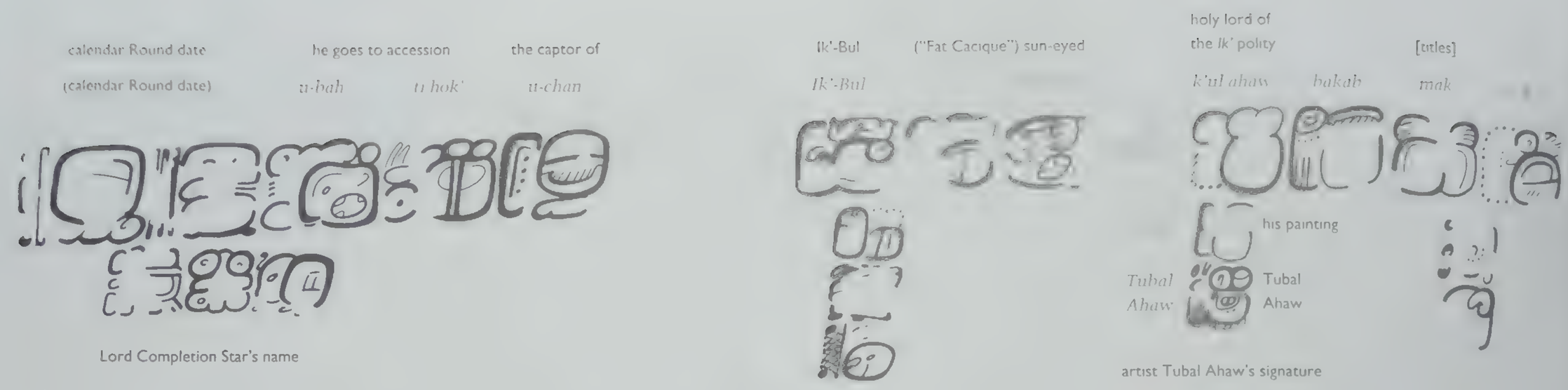
MS1445 and MS1446 (figures 4.27 and 4.13) represent contemporaneous ceramic production, although MS1446 has a black background and MS1445 utilizes fine line black painting on a cream-white ground. These two visually different vessels are nearly equivalent chemically to each other, yet the nominals following the *u-yul, u-kun* phrases are different. Entertaining the idea that the *u-yul* phrase refers to the name of the workshop, we would interpret these data as evidence for two workshops located very close together (spatially, temporally and socially), such that they shared clay resources and production techniques. In this way, the pots could have highly similar chemical profiles yet be the products of two different workshops.

The Closure Phrase: Generic Nominal Phrases and References to the Deceased

Generic nominal phrases predominate on the Classic Period painted pottery. The most common generic nominal is the combination of Rodent Bone and Hand Monkey (cf. Figure 4.26). Rodent Bone reads *ch'ok* and means

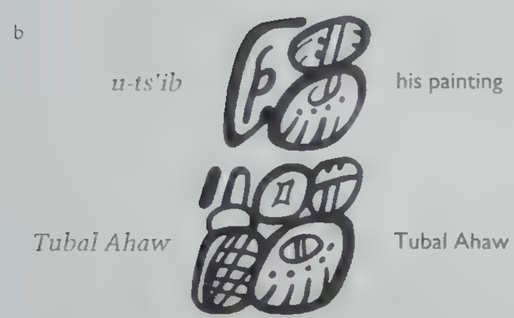
4.25 MS1122

The vase's owner/patron's name phrase ends with *u-na', u-ts'ibal* ("his knowledge, his painting"), the grammatical syntax implying that the "knowledge and painting" is a reference to that of the owner/patron.



a

b



4.24

a. MS1418. Vase painted by the regal artist *Tubal Ahaw*, whose signature is found within the pictorial scene. This artist was painting at the behest of the *Ik'* polity ruler known as the "Fat Cacique."

b. *Tubal Ahaw*'s signature from another vase he painted for the same ruler (drawings by D. Reents-Budet).

Because finely painted vases were used as social currency during important social and political rituals, one of the additives of prestige is a vase's connection with a renowned artist. This is preserved in the PSS by recording the names, titles and creative abilities of these master painters.[32] Typically, the artist signs his work either at the end of the PSS in the Closure phrase or in a short nominal phrase separate from the PSS. Regardless of placement, the phrase usually begins with *u-ts'ib* ("his writing/painting"), followed by the artist's name and/or titles (Figure 4.23).[33] Other signed works include MS1418 (Figure 4.24a, b), whose scribal signature phrase reads *u-ts'ib Tubal Ahaw* ("his painting *Tubal Ahaw*"). As is true of MS0651, *Tubal Ahaw* is not present in the vase's pictorial scene (Figure 5.4). Both artists can be inferred to be of regal status because the artist of MS0651 placed his signature next to the ruler and behind the throne and the painter of MS1418 carries the *ahaw* royal title.

The creative titles found in artists' nominal phrases are not restricted to them alone. These same titles also are found in the name phrases of the elite owners/patrons on both the pottery and the public stone monuments, recalling the Mesoamerican pattern of the nobility being trained in the arts. For example, the *chehen* ("doer/maker") title appears in the patron's name phrase on MS1446 (Figure 4.13).[34] On MS1137, *its'at* ("artist") opens the owner/patron's nominal phrase and modifies the owner/patron's name recorded on MSH019 (figures 4.2b and 4.12). Another example of a creative activity reference directed towards the patron is the nominal phrase on MS1122 (Figure 4.25). Here, the generic nominals *bak ch'ok*, *kelem* and *ah-lats* are followed by *u-na'*, *u-ts'ibal* ("his knowledge, his painting"). The syntax

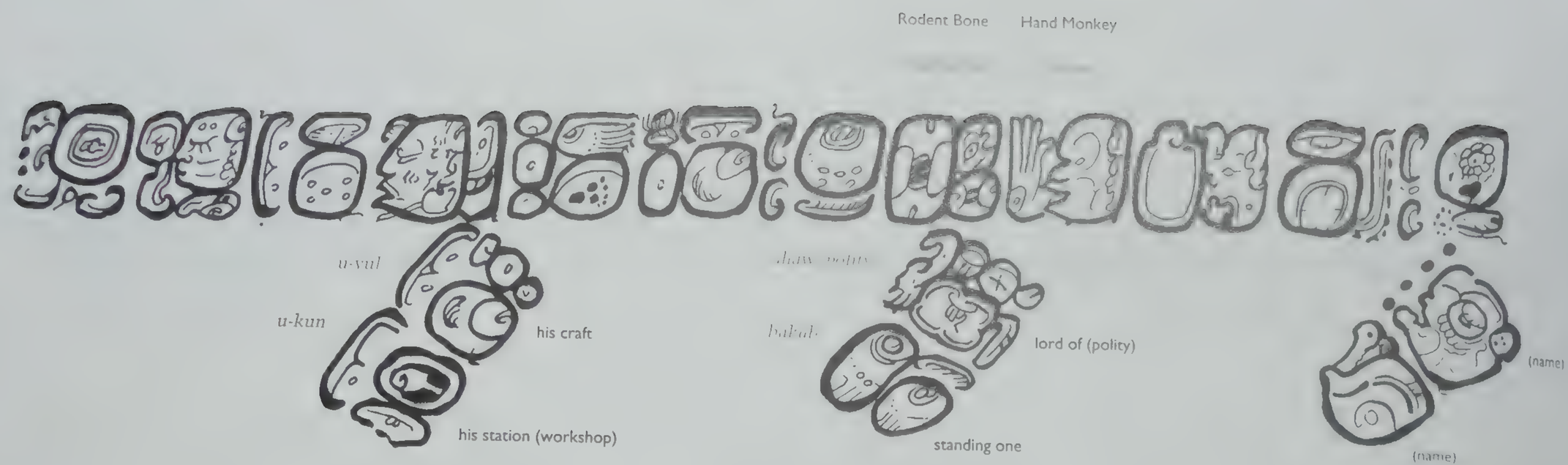
4.27 MS1445

Stylistically, this vase is very similar to MS1398 and probably was made in the same area, even the same workshop, because its PSS text ends with the same artist/workshop appellative *u-yul, u-kun* (*name*) as is found on MS1398.

Stylistic Variability and Classic Maya Geography

Stylistic variability in the PSS becomes apparent when comparing the texts painted on vessels made in different regions in the pre-Columbian Maya world. A comparison of two vessels from Guatemala, one from the Uaxactun area and the other from the general Tikal sphere, establishes a generalized regional pattern shared by painter/scribes from the two sites. At the same time, these painter/scribes also consistently chose different glyphs to distinguish their respective wares. This may be an artistic reflection of the political and probably socioeconomic competition known to have existed between the two sites during the Classic Period.

MS0194 (Figure 4.7), a vase attributable to a workshop located in the Uaxactún area, and MS0077 (Figure 4.28a, b), attributable to the general Tikal region, share the following PSS characteristics. Both artists painted two parallel rim texts whose PSS glyphic contents are basically the same. This type of parallel PSS is very uncommon. Both open with Initial Sign, followed by God N (*hoy-1* ["was blessed"]) on MS0194 and its alternative Flat Hand ("was presented") on MS0077. *Yich* ("its surface") follows, with the **chi** component represented as a deer head. Next is found the poorly understood alternative "writing" sequence **u-xubtal* (on MS0194) and **u-xubal* (on MS0077; Figure 4.28a, b), substituting for the more common *u-ts'ib*.

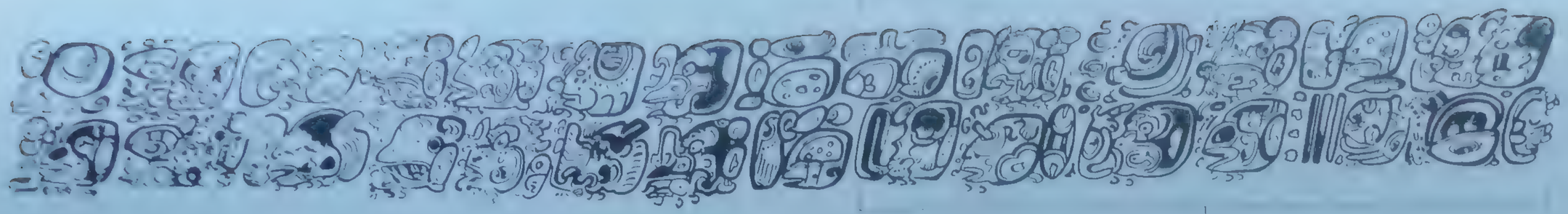


4.26 MS1398

The diagonal texts on this vase read *u-yul, u-kun (name)*, or "his craft, his station (name)," perhaps using the master's appellative to name the workshop.

"youth, offspring, lineage member" in modern Cholan languages. In its standard usage in Classic Period stela texts, *ch'ok* seems to refer to members of the ruling lineage other than the king. It often has the prefix *chak* ("red, great," also "rain god") or *bak* ("bone"). Hand Monkey appears to read *kelem*, whose meaning as recorded in modern Mayan languages is "youth." The consensus opinion among Maya epigraphers of the meaning of *chak ch'ok kelem* is that the phrase records the status of the person as closely related to, but of lesser status, than the king.

The most common closure phrase referring to the owner/patron of the vessel as being deceased reads *k'ul chahtan winik* ("holy person of the darkness place") (previously known as the *Chuen-uinal* title) and sometimes is followed by *sak ol way* ("pure *nagual* [spirit] of the portal") (cf. MS1137; Figure 4.2b).[37] The glyph compound *ah-lats* (cf. Figure 4.13) has been interpreted as a reference to death because *lats* has the meaning in modern Chol Mayan of "woven cloth" and the glyph could be interpreted as referring to a burial shroud.[38] However, as noted above, a new interpretation of this glyph suggests that it refers to "generation." The *k'ul chahtan winik* and *sak ol way* glyphic data support Michael Coe's conclusion that the polychrome pottery was intended as burial offerings. It must be kept in mind, however, that many polychrome vessels exhibit extensive wear patterns and the remains of hundreds of finely painted pots have been excavated from palace and lesser-status domestic trash deposits. These observations strongly imply that many finely painted vessels also were used in life.



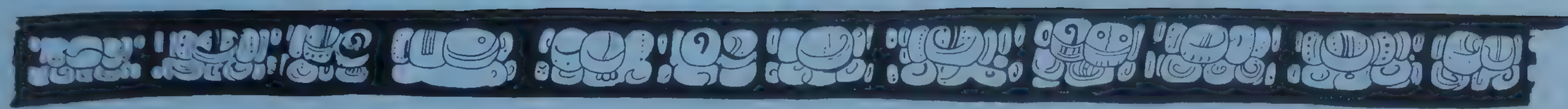
y-ich *u-* *xu* *-bal* *y-uch'ab* (nominal phrase)

4.28 MS0077

This vase from the Tikal region is painted with an unusual double text that repeats the same PSS information. The artist varied the two by painting the glyphs in subtly different ways and by using different nominal titles in each of the two lines.

a. drawing of PSS.

b. rollout photograph.



Occasionally a ceramic text is painted intentionally as a mirror image, as shown, for example, on the Codex-style dish MS1131 (Figure 4.29). This short reversed PSS reads *ts'ib naha hich* ("got page-written") in standard Codex-style parlance. Reversed glyphs are rare in any medium, but are found on a few stone monuments, such as Yaxchilán Lintel 25. A possible explanation for these mirror image texts is that they were created to be read by inhabitants of another dimension—similar to Lewis Carroll's concept of the upside-down world "behind the looking-glass." Mirrors have been used in many cultures to "see" the numinous world of death and dreams. Pottery vessels with reversed texts may have been intended for scrutiny by those in the supernatural realm. This is particularly appropriate for pottery vessels intended for a primarily funerary function.

Repeat Texts and Pseudoglyph Texts

Not all texts painted on the Late Classic Period pottery are PSS phrases. Many are simply repetitions of one to three glyphs, a few of which are related to the PSS but many of which are not. Some of these are readable while others are only reminiscent of Maya hieroglyphs, hence their designation as "pseudoglyphs." The function of these texts seems to range from the repetition of simple meaning (e.g., Initial Sign ["came into being"]) to being purely decorative and imitative of writing. Imitation may serve the purpose of creating the effect of high-status surface treatment on a vessel intended for persons of lower status. These texts crosscut painting styles and, therefore, seem to represent a socioeconomically determined subset of the Late Classic painted pottery from throughout the Maya regions.

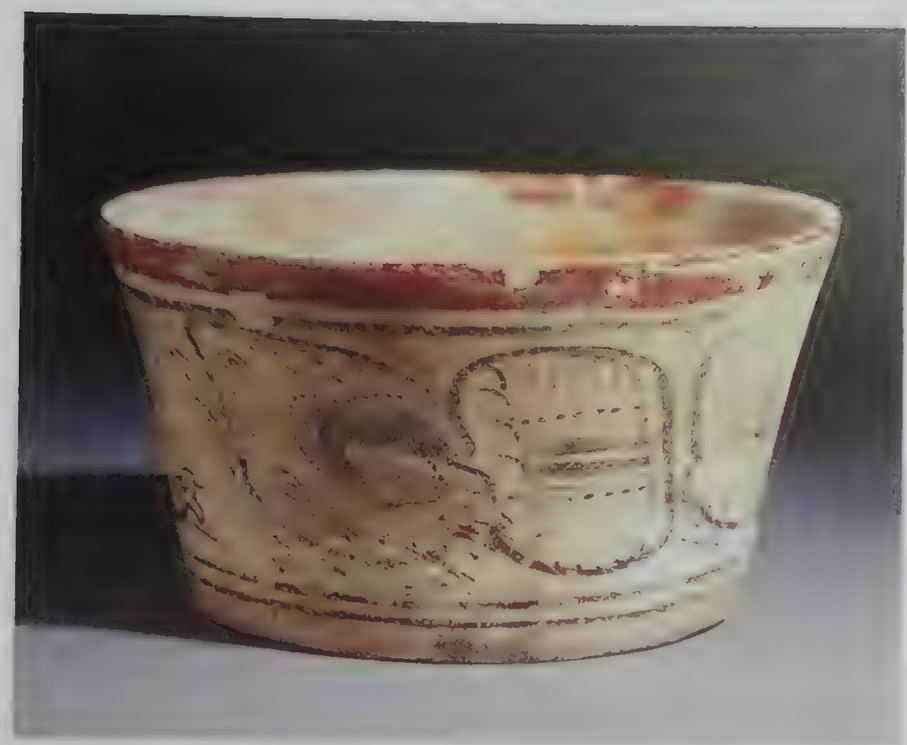
b

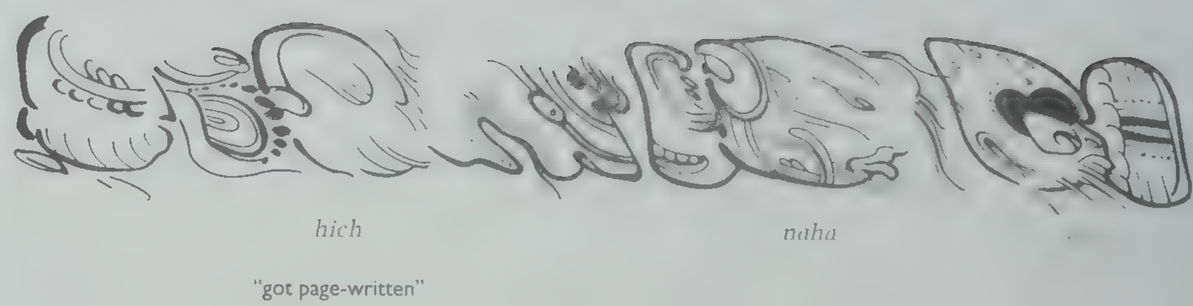
4.30

Examples of repeating Initial Signs replacing the full PSS (drawings by D. Reents-Budet and B. MacLeod)

a. MS0160

b. MS1521. *Also see catalog 32*





4.29 MS1131

The text on this Codex-style dish is painted in mirror image and thus reads from right to left (drawing by D. Reents-Budet).

Glyphic features distinguishing the two painting traditions include the incomplete PSS phrases on MS0194, wherein seemingly the painter simply ran out of room and ended the PSS when he filled the available space.[39] In contrast, on MS0077 both texts end with the titles and personal names of the vessel's patron/owner. The most distinguishing glyphic feature between these two vessels and their respective painting traditions is the presence of the so-called Uaxactún "designer label" on MS0194 and on stylistically similar vessels chemically attributable to Uaxactún, the phrase reading "Uaxactún-*hay y-uch'ab*" or "his Uaxactún-style thin-walled drinking vessel."[40] The restricted and consistent use of this glyphic vessel label and the overall painting style differences between the products of these two areas underscore the Uaxactún artists' desire to distinguish their creations from those of their neighbors and competitors.

The PSS on MS1126 is an outstanding example of visual poetry. This vase possibly comes from central or southern Campeche (Figure 4.9). The artist painted elaborate head variant glyphs throughout the text, beginning with the portrait head glyph of the deity GI rather than the more usual mirror form of Initial Sign. Subsequent unusual head variants include the Flat Hand verb with a jaguar head replacing the usual mirror in the hand, a possible head variant of **chi** followed by head variant versions of *y-uch'ab ta tsih te' kakaw* ("his drinking vessel for tree-fresh cacao"). A unique nominal phrase ending with *k'u* ("god" or "holy") closes the rim text. Two short vertical texts divide into two halves the pictorial scene painted on the body of the vase. These short texts are abbreviated PSS phrases, which may make reference to the unveiling of the offering depicted in the scene rather than of the vessel itself. If true, this is one of the very few PSS phrases whose dedicatory referent is not the vase.[41]

his clay object his clay object

u-bah(?) *u-bah(?)*

he goes/does (?)

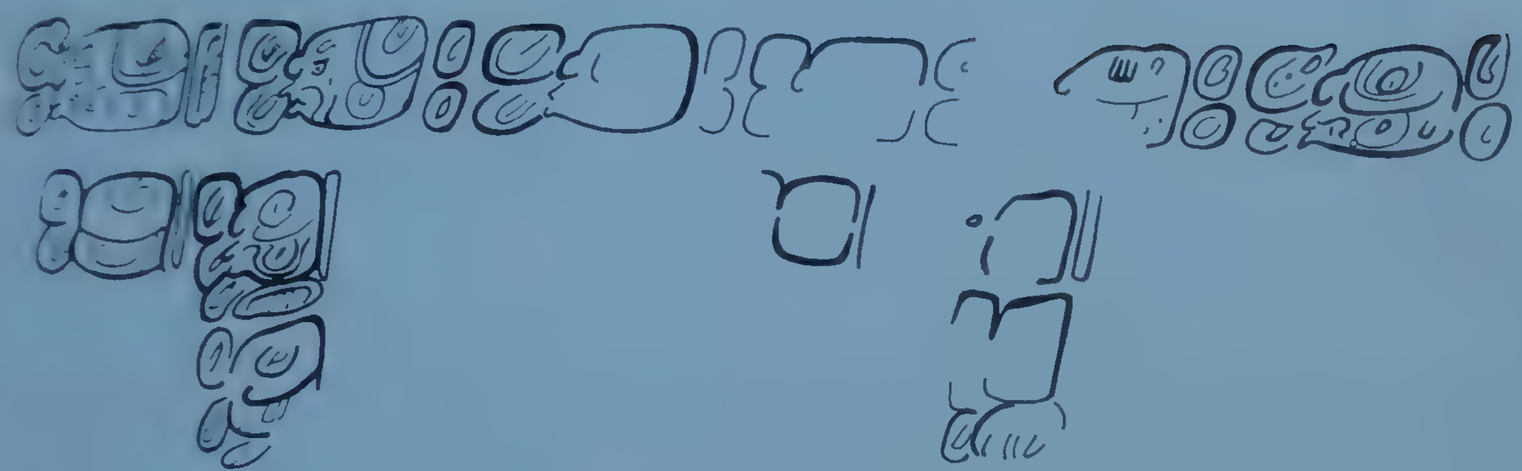
b

4.32

Chamá-style texts (drawings by B. MacLeod and D. Reents-Budet)

a. MS0779. These two short texts repeat the calendrical daysigns *Etz'nab*, *Muluc*, and *Ahaw*. (From a vase in the collection of the Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquín, Guatemala.)

b. MS0250. These glyphs repeat the simple phrases "his clay object" and possibly "he does [it]." *Also see catalog 60*



b

4.33

Some pottery texts are more imitative of writing than linguistically or phonetically meaningful (drawings by D. Reents-Budet and B. MacLeod).

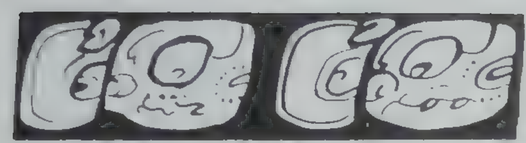
a. MS0608. These glyphs repeat a head variant sign that seems to have no linguistic or phonetic meaning.

b. MS0965. Instead of a readable PSS text, the rim of this vase is painted with repeating signs that may be abstractions of the Initial Sign.

lacked the social and/or economic wealth to acquire or produce formally dedicated or commissioned pieces whose literate PSS texts would label them as such.

On the other hand, pseudoglyphs can accompany the work of skilled painters, as demonstrated on MS0448 (Figure 4.35). And at least one example of a linguistically dubious PSS is known. On K1921, a painter with some artistic skill but with little literary understanding created a PSS-like text that is, at the least, highly unusual (Figure 4.36). Beginning with the very unusual co-occurrence of both God N and Step, the text continues with the phrase *u-bah ti te'* ("his becoming the tree"), perhaps referring to the king's symbolic role as the world tree. Interestingly, the scribe signed his name at the end of this strange PSS. Yet additional evidence of his lack of glyphic expertise is the double columns of empty glyph cartouches found among the ballplayers depicted in the vase's scene.[42]

b



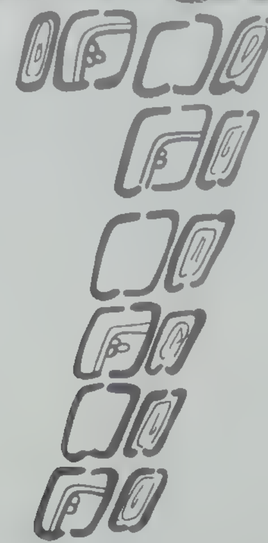
a

4.31

Texts that repeat words whose meanings in other contexts refer to "stela" and "his stone."

a. MS0059. *Lakam tun* ("stela"). *Also see catalog 2.*

b. MS0255. *U-tun* ("his stone"). *Also see catalog 27.*



Of the repeating PSS glyphs, Initial Sign is found on a number of stylistically different vessels on which each rendition of Initial Sign exhibits only minor variation (cf. MS0160 and MS1521; figures 4.30a, b). The text on MS0059 repeats a glyph reading *lakam tun*, the term for "stela" ("banner stone"; a new reading by David Stuart), recalling the repetition of *u-tun* ("his stone") on MS0255 (figures 4.31a, b). MS0059 was made in the central Petén lowlands of northern Guatemala and MS0255 is from the Acasaguastlán region of the Motagua River Valley in southern Guatemala. The Chamá-style vase MS0779 has a small assortment of repeating daysigns from the Maya calendar, and the one on Chamá-style MS0250 has a short repeating text perhaps reading *u-k'at u-k'at* ("his clay object, his clay object") (figures 4.32a, b). Other simple repeat texts that may be more imitative of writing than linguistically-based texts include MS0608 and MS0965 (figures 4.33a, b).

Pseudoglyphs are a more problematic category because, until modern epigraphers become fully fluent in the ancient writing system, the question of illiteracy and pseudowriting must remain open. Certainly there is a correlation between poor quality vase painting and the presence of pseudoglyph texts, inspiring the speculation of scribal illiteracy and the imitation of writing. A good example is MS0298 (Figure 4.34a), whose poorly executed, repeating, pseudohead variant glyphs do not suggest the inspired work of a literate, accomplished painter.

Other examples include repetitions of such simple signs as the daysign Muluc (T516a in J. E. S. Thompson's catalog of Maya hieroglyphs; Thompson 1962) plus an unrecognizable prefix (cf. MS0607; Figure 4.34b), or approximations of known glyphs whose juxtapositions suggest a deliberate semblance of writing the PSS but yet whose constituent signs are unreadable (cf. MS1138; Figure 4.34c). One can speculate that this semblance increased the value of a vessel within communities that

was blessed, was blessed, his becoming the tree his writing (artist's name)

4.36

The PSS text on K1921 may have been painted by a semiliterate artist/scribe because of its strange semantic content

Distinctive Features of Early Classic PSS Texts

Although the PSS achieved its full flowering in the Late Classic Period, it is the product of centuries of development (both epigraphic and sociopolitical). The antecedent Early Classic Period (A.D. 250–550) PSS phrases differ from those of the Late Classic Period in their grammatical components, the kinds of information recorded in the text, the style and form of individual glyphs, and their placement in relation to the accompanying pictorial images. For example, on Early Classic vessels from the Naranjo region, both verbs Step and God N are found in the Presentation section. This early pottery also exhibits more variation in vessel contents (for example, there is a rare reference to *sa'* "atole") and in the qualifiers for *kakaw*, including *om* ("frothy" cacao) (cf. MS0285; Figure 4.37). In contrast, the Late Classic pottery texts from this region generally use only one of the Presentation verbs and the *kakaw* qualifier is absent (cf. figures 4.20 and 4.12).

4.34

Some pottery texts are comprised of pseudoglyphs, which strongly suggests the painter's and/or consumer's illiteracy, since these glyphs simply imitate hieroglyphic writing (drawings by D. Reents-Budet).

a. MS0298 is painted with poorly executed head variant pseudoglyphs that do not suggest the inspired work of a literate painter.

b. MS0607 is painted with signs that are a simple approximation of the daysign Muluc.

c. MS1138 is embellished with a rim text that is only a semblance of writing because its signs are unrecognizable vis-à-vis the corpus of Maya hieroglyphs. *Also see catalog 45.*

a.

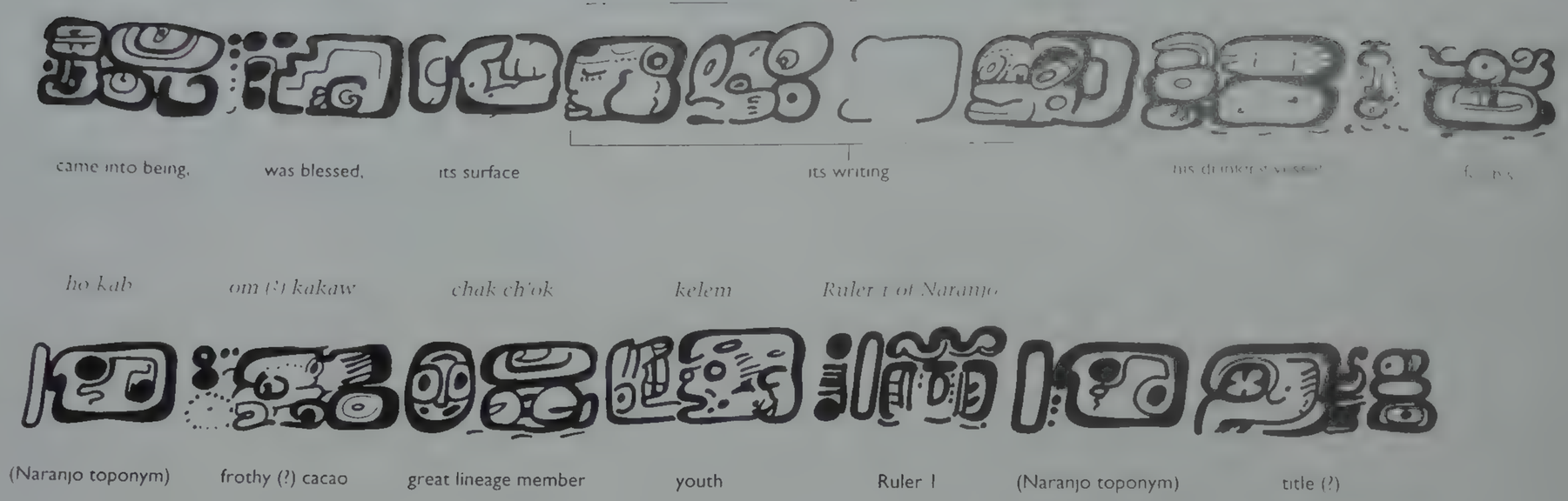
b.

c.

4.35

MS0448 is painted by a highly accomplished artist, although the tiny hieroglyphs painted within the scene are pseudoglyphs and convey only the concept of recorded speech and historical commentary. *Also see catalog 14.*

4.38 MS1680 (*here and overleaf*)
The Primary Standard Sequence developed throughout the Early Classic Period and becomes a standard component of the polychrome pottery tradition by late Early Classic times, when this bowl was created (Los Angeles County Museum of Art AC1992.129.1. General Acquisition Fund.)



4.37

MS0285 is an Early Classic bowl from the Naranjo area. Its PSS text includes its characteristic variation in the qualifier for *kakaw: om* ("frothy" cacao) (drawing by D. Reents-Budet).

The PSS does not become a standard component of the polychrome pottery until well into the Early Classic Period (ca. A.D. 450). By this time, however, the text appears in its full form (cf. MS1680; Figure 4.38). Abbreviated PSS texts also characterize the Early Classic pottery, often beginning with the PSS's Vessel Type section (*y-uch'ab*, *y-uch'naab* or *y-uch'-ha'[-ab]*, all meaning "his drinking vessel"). The Early Classic artists also tend to paint glyphs in a larger format, frequently occupying most of the available flat surface on a vessel and/or its lid (cf. MSBV10; Figure 4.39). Early Classic vessels often are painted with non-PSS texts such as that found on MS1638, a lidded tetrapod vessel excavated from the Mundo Perdido complex at Tikal (Figure 4.40). This vase's vertical format of single columns of glyphs resembles other Early Classic texts, and even though individual glyphic signs are recognizable on this vase (for example, the *Ik'* and *Akbal* daysigns), the text remains undecipherable at this time.

MS0040 (Figure 4.41) is an Early Classic plate with an unusually elaborate PSS whose interpretation may indicate another content and function for polychrome plates beyond that of ritual food service and social currency. The PSS opens with Initial Sign and Step.[13] Following is *uht-i ch'abtan* ("it happened [at the] place of sacrifice"). The text ends with a long nominal phrase that includes the name of the plate's owner/patron, who is an elite person from Naranjo (based on the presence of the Naranjo **sak Chuen,** or "pure artisan," regal title) and concludes with his mother's name.

lineage member | youth | child of woman | (name) | holy | (name) | child of man

came into being

was blessed

huy-i

its surface

y-ich

its writing

u-ts'ib

his drinking vessel

y-uch'ab

his food frothy (?) cacao

ta y-utal

om (?) kakaw

One interpretation of this text is that the person named in the nominal phrase was blessed or "made proper" (his deified image may be found in the center of the plate). The other is that this plate is called a *ch'abtan* ("place of sacrifice"), that is, a vessel used to hold a sacrificial offering, which is one of the functions of these wide plates (see Chapter 3). The problem with the first reading is that it is grammatically unusual for a person to be the subject of the verb *uht-i*. Arguing against the second reading is the lack of the expected *u-* pronominal prefix on the object word *ch'abtan*. Given these uncertainties, the interpretation of this plate's text must await further investigation.

Historical Texts and Actors

In addition to the Primary Standard Sequence, some vessels' hieroglyphic texts are historical commentaries on specific events. These texts usually accompany a pictorial representation of the historical event. As such, they recall the contemporary stone monuments that also depict historical persons engaged in acts of major political or religious significance and whose texts elaborate on these events. Historical texts seem to be associated with only a few painting styles from particular areas and generally are more rare on the pottery. Perhaps this is due to the inherently private nature of these vessels—which operated in the elite ritual and funerary spheres—in contrast to the stelae, which functioned as public records of state history and power.

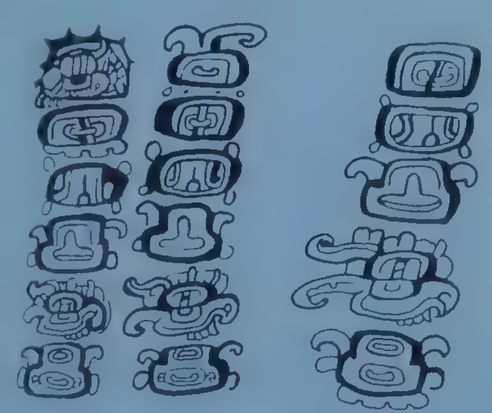
Many of the vases with historical texts were made in workshops located at sites in the regions around Lake Petén-Itzá, including MS1491 (a vase excavated at the site of Tayasal, located on the southern tip of the lake), and the stylistically related vase MS0334 (figures 4.42, 4.43 and 4.46). MS1491 depicts a seated male figure facing two seated females. Between them is a large tripod plate containing perhaps a sacrificial offering. The main text includes the *u-bah* ("they do") verb, but otherwise the text is too eroded to read. Each of the women is

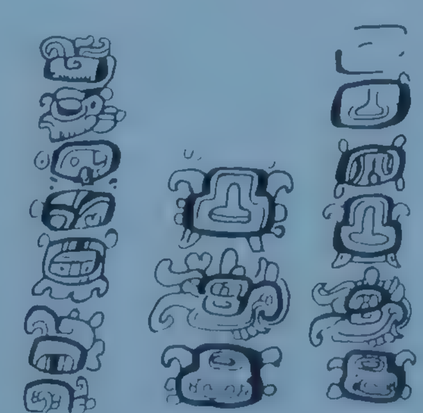
4.39 MSBV10

The large format and non-PSS glyphs on this lidded tripod vase are typical of Early Classic painted pottery. *Also see catalog 26*

4.40 MS1638

Excavated from the Mundo Perdido complex at Tikal, this lidded tetrapod vase's non-PSS glyphs are typical of the Early Classic texts painted on the pottery. *Also see catalog 28.*





Akbal

ti

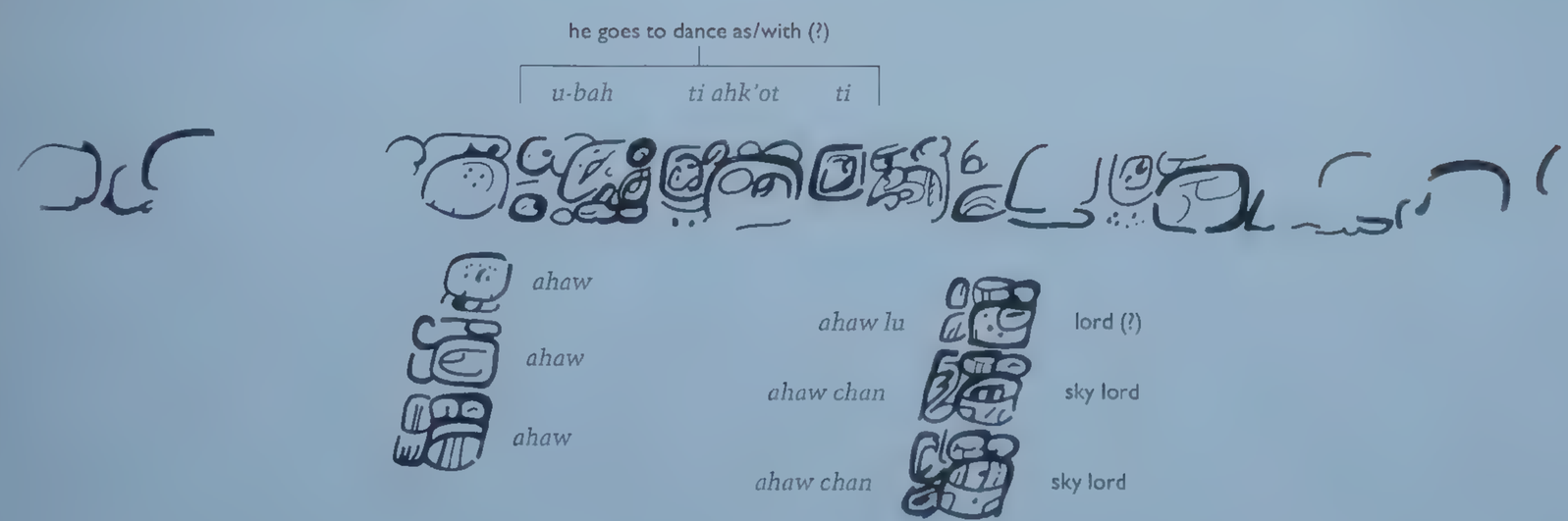
Ahaw

4.39

4.40

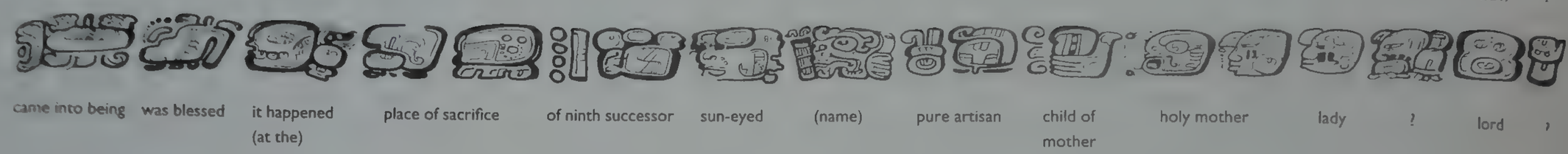
4.42

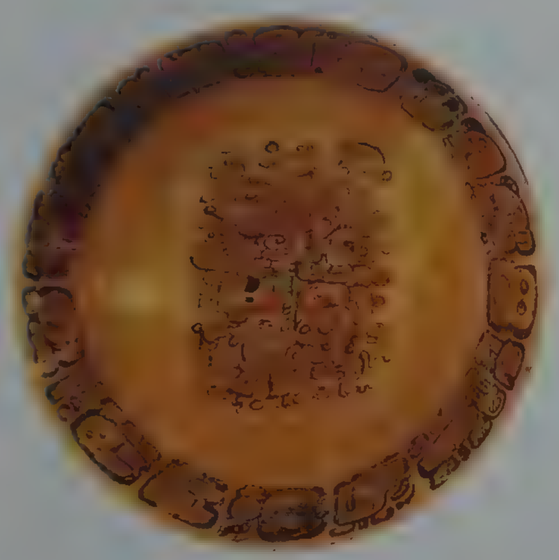
MS1491 was excavated at Tayasal on the shores of Lake Petén-Itzá. The vase depicts perhaps a sacrificial event undertaken by the man and two women depicted on the vase and named in its hieroglyphic texts. The main verb describing the event is too eroded to read other than the general verb *u-bah* ("they do"). *Also see catalog 41.*



4.43

MS0334 comes from the same region as MS1491 (4.42). Its imagery records a historical event that included ceremonial dancing (drawing by D. Reents-Budet). *Also see catalog 50.*





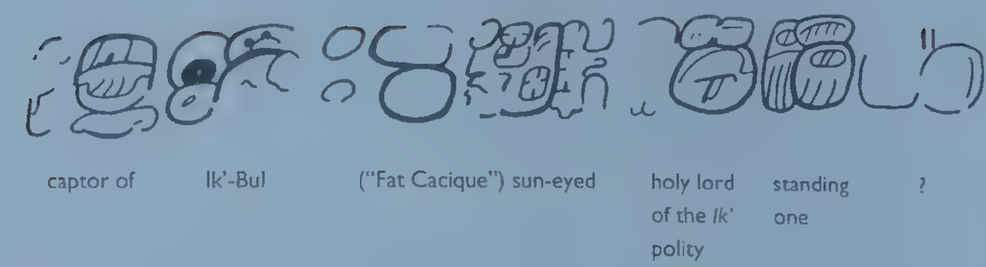
4.41 MS0040

This Early Classic plate from the Naranjo region may have been used as a container for a sacrificial offering, as seems to be indicated by its hieroglyphic text. *Also see catalog 23.*

named by a short text in front of her, beginning with the female prefix *na'* ("lady"). MS0334 (figures 4.43 and 5.13) depicts a meeting of lords, and the uneroded parts of its text read *u-bah ti ahk'ot ti (ł)* ("he goes to dance with/as . . . [eroded]"). The vertical texts on this vase include glyphic versions of the *ahaw* ("lord") glyph and designate the elite status of the men depicted in the scene.

Vases from the *Ik'* polity, located to the north and west of Tayasal and including the site of Motul de San José (Figure 4.46), are characterized by historical texts in addition to their idiosyncratic versions of the PSS (see Chapter 5). Among those with historical texts is MS0445, whose pictorial program is a two-scene narrative in which two figures first sit together in private space and then move out into more public space in the royal court, where they are joined by two other figures (Figure 4.44). Name glyphs found next to the two principals include *Ts'unu(n)-Balam*, or "Hummingbird-Jaguar," and a head glyph with an *ah*-prefix (an affix referring to the male pronoun). The same glyph (but without the *ah*-) appears in the second scene in its central text, located in front of the figure seated on the dais. This text reads *ta-hoy 9-(daysign) bah ti ahk'ot ahaw-na k'in ahaw bakab* ("on the blessing of 9-[daysign] he goes to dance, lord of the house, sun-(unknown titles) lord standing one"). The artist's signature is found at the far right beginning with the expected *u-ts'ib* ("his painting") and followed by his personal name and/or titles.

MS1418 also comes from the *Ik'* site polity (figures 4.24a and 5.4). Its scene and text are visual records of a portion of the accession rite of the ruler nicknamed the "Fat Cacique."[44] The action focuses on a dialogue between Lord Completion-Star and the "Fat Cacique." The historical text begins with a date (unfortunately eroded), then continues with *u-bah ti hok' u-chan Ik'-Bul k'inich k'ina k'ul ahaw, [Ik' emblem glyph] bakab mak te' k'ul chan-nal-łł* ("he goes to accession, the captor of *Ik'-Bul*, the "Fat Cacique," sun-eyed, holy lord of the Ik' polity, standing one, tree-person, holy one of the sky place"). Lord Completion-Star is named in the short



4.45

phrase next to him. The artist not only signed this vase, his signature phrase beginning with the expected *u-ts'ib Tubal Ahaw* ("his writing/painting *Tubal Ahaw*"), but he also may be depicted in the scene.

A third *Ik'* polity vase with a historical text is MS1121 (figures 4.45 and 5.2). It also features the "Fat Cacique," who wears a mask rendered in "x-ray" fashion. He is perched upon an acrobatic jaguar who extends below and arches above him. This may be the occasion of a rite wherein this ruler dances with and/or becomes an "arching jaguar throne" through his dancing. Following a partially eroded date (*7-?, 13 Xul*), the text reads *u-bah ti ahk'ot ti kuchte' balam, u-chan Ik'-Bul, "Fat Cacique," [titles]* ("he goes to dance with/on a jaguar throne, captor of *Ik'-Bul*, 'Fat Cacique' . . . ").

Regional Dialects and Glyphic Styles

Collaboration among scholars from different disciplines has led to the discovery of several layers of cultural and historical information in the painted ceramics from various geographic locations in the ancient Maya realms. These collaborative efforts allow us to isolate a group of pottery that shares not only clay chemistry and painting technique but also hieroglyphic texts and their underlying linguistic components. Chapter 5 examines at length seven well-known pottery painting styles and discusses how their respective hieroglyphic texts help to define each style. In this chapter, a few brief examples of other painting styles and their texts' prominent linguistic and stylistic features are presented. These analyses are still in the early stages, but because of their consistent patterns, they promise to be enormously productive in the coming years.

The Codex-Style

Codex-style pottery was created in workshops located at and around the site of Nakbé in the far north central Petén near the Mexican border (figures 4.2a, 4.4, 4.8 and 4.29).[45] As noted above, this ceramic tradition is largely one of pottery produced in large numbers for a broad segment of Maya society and seemingly for mainly funerary purposes. This conclusion is based on the generic nature of the nominals found in the PSS texts and the fact that many of these vessels are relatively poorly formed and simplistically and/or not carefully

4.44

MS0445 is painted with two related scenes that must have been part of one historical event. Two lords sit together inside a small room at the left side of the composition. These two move into the main throne room, the gesturing man now sitting on the dais. The texts describe the event as one that included a ritual dance as well as named the participants. The artist placed his name behind the throne. *Also see catalog 40.*

4.45 MS1121

This vase from the *Ik'* polity features the ruler nicknamed the "Fat Cacique" because of his corpulence. Its non-PSS text records the specifics of the depicted ritual dance, during which the "Fat Cacique" and his cohorts transform themselves into the supernaturals in whose guises they are rendered (drawing by D. Reents-Budet).

holy lord of the Ik' polity
k'ul ahaw Ik'

Sak-Muan
sak-muan

tree person
yax makte'

standing one
bakab

was presented
Flat Hand

came into being
av-a

(the) surface
hich

his drinking vessel
y-uch'ab

(name)
chuk-hi ti chan

artist
its'at

adorned
pits

child of father
u-nik

4.44

ts'unu(n)-balam bate'
Hummingbird-Jaguar ball player

ak- ʞ
"turtle . . ."

ta hoy 9-(day) bah ti ahk'ot
ahaw-na, k'in-ʞ, ʞ,
ahaw bakab

"on the blessing of 9 [day] he goes to dance, lord of the house, (titles), lord, standing one"

yax ul (name)
"first atole . . . (name)"

u-ts'ib ʞ-naab
his painting (name)

[illegible] PSS texts by and large copy the same graphic [illegible] of figures 4.2b and 4.8): "came into being, was page-written his drinking vessel for his cacao [illegible] holy person of the darkness place, pure *nagual* of [illegible]." Initial Sign is nearly always the "mirror" variant. Flat Hand and God N are rarely found, and Step does not occur. Instead, the incorporated form "was page-written" follows Initial Sign. *Ta y-utal kakaw* is the recipe of choice, although *ti y-utal, ta ul* and *ti ul* occasionally occur. Combined with the consistent use of the drinking vessel word *y-uch'ab*, these point unequivocally to a Cholan language as that in which the artists were writing and painting.[47]

The Uaxactun Style and Its Regional Distribution

This very important painting tradition includes vessels made in the immediate vicinity of Uaxactún and vessels whose chemical profiles match those of potsherds excavated from the site of El Zotz', located due west of Tikal. It is curious that the painting style is absent from the pottery of Tikal, which is located between the two sites. Given the sociopolitical, and presumably economic, competition between Uaxactún and Tikal during the Classic Period, however, the absence of the style at Tikal may not be so incomprehensible. If the painted pottery were used as social currency operating in the sociopolitical sphere, it would follow that the two adversaries would tend to keep their ceramic material culture as distinctive as possible from that of the rival site. The presence of stylistically similar vessels in El Zotz'-produced pottery may suggest cooperative interaction between Uaxactún and El Zotz', whose artists reflected these connections through imitation of the Uaxactún style.

Both MS1444 and MS0194 (figures 4.3 and 4.7) are attributable to pottery workshops located at Uaxactún. The PSS on MS1444 is typical of texts from this area. It includes Initial Sign and God N with a *hu* prefix, God N usually predominating over Step or Flat Hand on Uaxactún pottery. God N typically is followed by *y-ich u-* ("writing bat"-*bal*) ("writing bat" possibly reading *u-xubal*), followed by "Uaxactún *hay-y-uch'ab*."[48] The absence of the *-nah(al)* verbal suffix also is characteristic of the style. *Ay-a, yich* and *y-uch'ab* are Cholan indicators.

MS1432 is a bowl painted in the Uaxactún tradition but whose clay chemistry matches potsherds from El Zotz', suggesting this site as the location of the workshop where this bowl was created (Figure 4.47). Correspondingly, its PSS lacks the Uaxactún "designer label." Otherwise, the text mirrors the Uaxactún tradition: *ay-a huy-i y-ich u-xubal u-hay y-uch'ab ta tsih te'el kakaw* ("came into being, was blessed, its surface, its writing/finishing, his thin-walled drinking vessel for tree-fresh cacao").

Mayan Language Distribution During the Classic Period

▲ Archaeological site

Locations approximate

International border

0 20 40 60
Kilometers

0 20 40 60
Miles

Gulf of Mexico

Caribbean Sea

Pacific Ocean

MEXICO

BELIZE

GUATEMALA

HONDURAS

EL SALVADOR

Becan
Calakmul
El Mirador
Kinal
Altun Ha
La Pacaya
Nakbe
Xultun
Lamanai
El Zotz
Uaxactun
Tikal
Nakum
Piedras Negras
Naranjo
Motul de San Jose
Buenavista
Tayasal
Ucanal
Palenque
Altar de Sacrificios
Dos Pilas
Naj Tunich
Copan

4.46

Map of the Maya lowlands indicating the location of archaeological sites where distinctive painting styles and pottery vessels were created.

[illegible] in this cassette Peten is the numu [illegible]

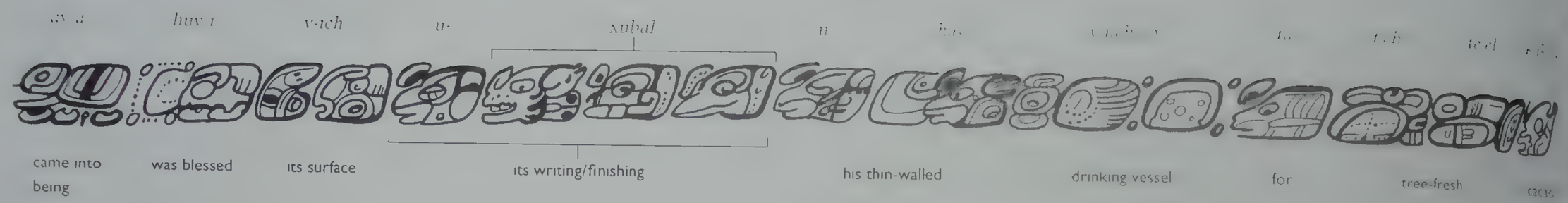
[illegible] that frequently appears in the [illegible] ancestors of the Nataaro ruling lineage [illegible] This same person is named [illegible] on Tikal Altar 5 paired with [illegible] as a captive taken in a battle that [illegible] Tikal and Nataaro.

[illegible] features in this group's ess [illegible] variant of Initial Sign (cf. [illegible] followed by either God N, Step, [illegible] Flat Hand and [illegible] is the preferred [illegible] of the "writing" verbal compound, and *y-uch'ab*

Conclusions

The Classic Period pottery s hieroglyphic texts are a vast reserve of information about ancient Maya culture and about Mayan language structure and geographic distribution fourteen hundred years ago in Guatemala, Belize and Mexico. The texts allow us to identify Classic Period Cholan dialects and artists' or workshops' idiolects through glyphic nuances of lexicon and grammar. They also provide unique evidence for spheres of artistic and political interaction, which are not documented on the stelae and which are not retrievable from the archaeological record. We now know the names and social pedigree of master artists who created these paintings on ceramic and the identities of some of the elite and

[illegible] drawing by D. Bernie Rose



4.47

MS1432 is a bowl painted in the Uaxactún tradition but lacking the so-called Uaxactún designer label, indicating that the vessel was not made at the site. Its chemical composition is similar to that of pottery from the nearby site of El Zotz'. *Also see catalog 5.*

Black Background Vases

The chemical profiles of this group of vases place its workshops to the east of Tikal toward Naranjo and possibly as far north as the Kinal area. Their texts represent yet another workshop dialect of Cholan, one which may have been influenced by a Yucatecan language, judging from the presence of the Yucatecan preposition *ti*. Examples include MS1369, K1941 and MS1397 (figures 4.48, 4.49 and 4.50). Many of these feature an otherwise rare verbal quadruplet consisting of Initial Sign, Flat Hand, God N and a verbal *ts'ib-naha* rather than the nominal form of the "writing" stem (cf. MS1369 and K1941; figures 4.48 and 4.49). *Y-uch'ab ti y-utal kakaw* typically follows. The owner/patron of the small vase K1941 is a lady from the Tikal royal house. MS1397 (Figure 4.50) has several unique features after Initial Sign, including *tsih hich* ("new surface") and two elusive glyphs preceding *tsih ts'ib* ("new writing"), followed by *y-uch'ab ta tsih ta y-utal ha' kakaw* ("his drinking vessel for new substance, for his cacao beverage food"). The text poetically plays upon the repetition of *tsih* ("new" or "fresh").

The Eastern Peten Group

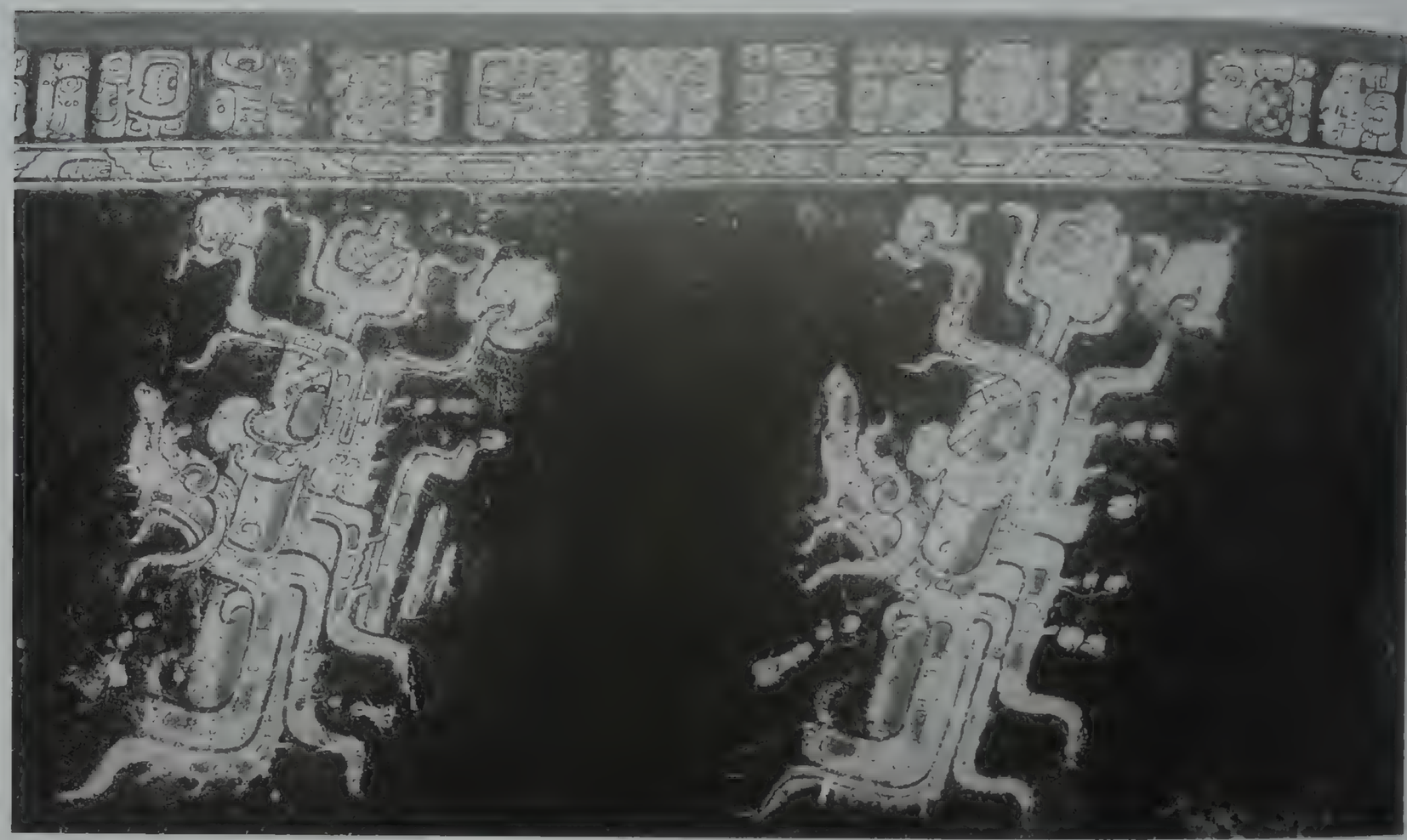
Vessels of this group share the black-on-cream palette and fine-line painting that resemble the Codex-style (cf. MS0151; Figure 4.8). However, differences in vessel shape, similar use of pictorial space, particular iconographic motifs, consistent hieroglyphic patterns and chemical profiles identify these vessels as representing a separate painted ceramic tradition whose workshops were located at sites in the eastern Peten along the Guatemalan-Belizean border (cf. MS1421 and MS1396 figures 4.6 and 4.10).[19] MS1398 and MS1445 exemplify this group (figures 4.26 and 4.27). Both vessels' texts include the same appellative, which may name the potter who made the vessel or the workshop in which the pots were created. They also share the same emblem glyph, characterized by a flintlike prefix and a **tun** ("stone") or **wits** ("mountain") mainsign. This emblem resembles one found on the walls of Naj Tunich Cave but also shares features with the Ucanal and Xultun emblem glyphs (Figure 4.46). Additional glyphic evi

				came into					
	for the food cacao beverage	for fresh	?	being	new	surface	?	?	new

450

Beginning of

standing one	came into being	was presented	was blessed	was painted	her drinking vessel	for her cacao food	Lady K'an		holy lady of Tikal
bakab	*ay-a*	*Flat Hand*							



4.49

4.49 K1941

This black background vase shares with MS1369 the rare verbal quadruplet (see 4.48). The owner/patron is a lady of the royal house of Tikal.

4.50

MS1397 is a member of the black background pottery style from the central Petén lowlands east of Tikal. It is unique in the group for its poetic repetition of the word *tsih* ("fresh").

royal patrons who commissioned these art works for themselves, for members of their family and for use as social currency.

Beyond the linguistic and artistic production insights, the Primary Standard Sequence communicates the ritual empowerment of the polychrome vessel through the act of painting (or carving) its surface. This formulaic dedicatory text establishes the vessel's proprietary status and specialized function in the broad domain of Maya service ware. The non-PSS historical texts narrate uncommon details of Classic Period history and their enwrapping elite rituals while also preserving the names and social identities of the central participants. In the end, many of these pottery vessels served their owners in the afterlife as requisite funerary items. Their pictorial imagery and hieroglyphic texts allow us to glance into the shadows of Maya cosmology via the metaphors and expressions for the world of dreams and death to which they were, sooner or later, committed

[illegible] These frequently create the [illegible] writing—its grammatical reference [illegible] to the scribe but instead to the vessel itself—thus "its writing" (MacLeod [illegible]).

Nikolai Grube's recent (1990) studies [illegible] have refined our understanding [illegible] including the identification [illegible] "carving." His recent [illegible] an incised vase from the Mundo Perdido excavations at Tikal, has [illegible] another variant of the "carve" [illegible] that appears to read *y-ux-ul*. Grube [illegible] some of the diachronic features of the PSS, noting its characteristics [illegible] the Early Classic Period (A.D. 250–[illegible]) and its later evolution during the Late Classic Period (A.D. 550–850). Grube concludes that the PSS is not a hymn to the dead but rather a reference to the ritual manufacture and use of ceramics.

[illegible] *ich* (glypically spelled *yi-chi*) represents the possessed noun "its surface" and is linked to the vase's surface treatment. The position of *'hich* following *ts'ib* makes it clear that it is incorporated into the verbal *ts'ib* stem similar to the term "to deer-hunt" in English. In the PSS, it literally means "it got page-written" (*ts'ib-naha-hich*) (cf. MS1137; Figure 4.2b).

12. The Mayan "vessel" word *y-uch'ab* describes bowls, dishes and tall vases. Based on our current understanding, it is a generic term for any vessel from which liquid and semiliquid foods are consumed in a drinking fashion and is not correlated with any of these specific vessel shapes. The European categories such as "cup" and "vase" do not seem to be applicable to Classic Maya vessel shape categories.

The third person singular pronoun in all Mayan languages does not distinguish gender, *u* can be either "her" or "his." Throughout this chapter, the pronoun will be translated as "his" unless we are certain that the patron, owner or artist is female. This choice of pronoun follows the majority of vessels whose nominals record their patrons, owners and artists as male. This does not mean that women were not patrons, owners of these vessels or were not artists; a few PSS texts do record the names of women. However, these are rare.

13. Barbara MacLeod and Brian Stross (1990) were the first to suggest that this glyph reads *y-uch'ib* ("his cup"). This is now thought to be *y-uch'ab*, due to new evidence that the wing has the phonetic value of *ch'a*. Stephen Houston independently has reached this same reading, and it is now widely accepted. Stephen Houston and Karl Taube (1987) demonstrated that the Inverted Ahau component of the PSS is in complementary distribution with the Wing Quincunx component and that it is found only on plates. They concluded that *u-lak* reads "his plate." Although Houston and Taube were not able to decipher the Wing Quincunx glyph, they surmised it must mean "his vase." These authors also deciphered the glyph referring to the other shape category of plates, the *u-hawte'* (his/her tripod plate).

14. In the sequence *u-*"Uaxactún" *hay y-uch'ab*, both are possessed nouns. Were *hay* an adjective here, the glyphs would read *u* "Uaxactun" *hay uch'ab*. However, this never occurs, and thus we can be certain of the noun value of *hay*.

The sequence *u-*"Uaxactun" *hay y-uch'ab*, but without the "Uaxactun" reference, also appears on Chochola style carved ceramics made in northern Campeche and western Yucatan, Mexico. There are many iconographic connections between the painted pottery from the northern Peten of Guatemala and Chochola ceramics from Mexico, and thus it is not surprising to find a linguistic link as well.

15. There are a number of abbreviated PSS examples that delete the Presentation and Surface Treatment sections, opening with the glyph for the possessed object. These PSS phrases translate as "His/her drinking vessel . . ."

16. The use of this pulp form of cacao has been documented among the modern Chorti Maya of Guatemala, and it is eaten commonly among people living in close proximity to cacao plantations.

17. David Stuart (1987) was the first to identify Coe's Fish hieroglyph (a common feature of the PSS) as *kakaw* or chocolate. MacLeod and Grube (1990) were the first to suggest that Coe's Serpent Segment glyph reads *ta yutal* and refers to the "food" (**ut*) put inside the vessel. The phrase thus reads "for his cacao food." The authors find clear parallels in modern Yucatec Mayan, for example, *y-ochel bu'ul* ("his bean food"). MacLeod and Grube also have identified a glyph for "atole", *ul*, and suggest that the *tsih* (Young Lord) glyph means "fresh, new." More recently, Grube and Werner Nahm have identified this particular Young Lord head as that of the youthful Cacao God, called *Tsih*.

18. See Karl Taube (1989) for an in-depth discussion of *wah*, or the maize tamale, in Maya art and epigraphy.

19. Recent unpublished work by Nikolai Grube, Stephen Houston, Barbara MacLeod, Werner Nahm and David Stuart has established these readings for Rodent Bone and Hand Monkey. See MacLeod (1990) for a longer discussion of their research. Nikolai Grube (1993, personal communication) is credited with the decipherment of *Lo'ib u-* as "south."

20. MS1436 has been repainted in modern times. Although the hieroglyphs are

Notes

1. For example, the words **hich* ("surface"), *uch'ab* ("cup"), *tsih* ("new"), **ut* ("food"), and *ch'ok* ("youth") are Cholan and were not, as far as is known, borrowed by their Yucatecan neighbors and coparticipants in Classic culture. Strengthening this belief that the PSS was created by Cholan speakers is the fact that there are no unequivocally Yucatecan words in any of the PSS glyphs. Most of the other words targeted by its deciphered signs were either shared genetically by both language subfamilies (as with *ts'ib*) or were borrowed into Yucatecan (as with *ul*). Some, like *hoy* and **huy*, may have been a doublet in common parlance in both language groups, although it appears that Cholan speakers originated the latter and Yucatecan speakers the former.

2. Sylvia Méluzin (1992:287) citing Josserand (1976:505) and Hopkins (1982:4), suggests that Yucatecan Mayan underlies the development of Cholan proper (or proto-Cholan) during the pre-Classic Period, prior to the domination by later Greater Cholan speakers during the proto-Classic Period and the flowering of Maya hieroglyphic writing. If true, one finds Yucatecan markers and linguistic descendants in the Classic Period, mostly Cholan, hieroglyphic texts. Therefore, the determination of the geographic boundaries among the various Mayan speakers and dialects thereof during the Classic Period through use of the hieroglyphic texts (and especially those on the finely painted pottery) must take into account local styles of writing, as well as speaking, including all the possible glyphic dinosaurs and potential innovations.

3. M. Coe (1973:13).

4. See Michael Coe (1973, 1977, 1978, 1986). Earlier, Frans Blom (1956) had linked the imagery painted on the so-called "Blom Plate" to a tale from the *Popol Vuh*. Many of the stories of the *Popol Vuh* survive among the modern Quiché Maya of the Guatemalan highlands.

5. The establishment of the phonetic nature of the PSS is not surprising because during the past twenty years the entire field of Maya epigraphy has been transformed by the application of the principles of phoneticism advanced in the 1950s by the Russian scholar Yurii Knorosov. For recent research that includes the phonetic nature of Maya hieroglyphic writing see Nikolai Grube (n.d., 1986, 1990, 1992), Stephen Houston (1987, 1993), Barbara MacLeod (n.d., 1989, 1990), Linda Schele (1980, 1982, 1992), David Stuart (n.d.b, 1985, 1987, 1988), and MacLeod and Stross (1990), among the many contributors to unraveling the PSS puzzle. Also see M. Coe (1992).

6. In only a few cases have new signs appeared in previously unknown versions of the PSS. In some of these rare cases, the new substitutions have been explained linguistically.

7. This reading of **hoy** and **huy** (see MacLeod 1990) is based on the God N head itself having the value **ho(b)** because of its appearance in the head variant glyph for the number five (*ho'*) and in the name *Hobnil* as an alternative name for the south *Pawahtun* as recorded by Bishop Landa in the sixteenth century and demonstrated by Michael Coe to be the pre-Columbian name of God N. The infixed or postfixed **yi** syllable completes the spelling **hoy**, which is linked to words meaning "bless" and "use for the first time" in Yucatec Mayan. Linda Schele has noted that *hoy* in Chorti means "make proper." This God N glyph and its "Step" replacement, then, shed light on the ritual dedication of elite vessels.

8. Flat Hand's usual **(h)a** suffix is now understood as the passive form of transitive verbs in the writing system, following the same pattern in modern Cholan languages by the addition of an *-ah* suffix.

9. The potential meaning of Flat Hand as "was presented" is based on its possible reading as *hil*, which is glossed as "completion" in Cholan and "unveiling" in Yucatec and Tzotzil. This raises the issue of more than one homophonous root and should receive study apart from this general introduction to the PSS.

10. David Stuart (n.d.) was the first to decipher the "Fire Quincunx" as *u-ts'ib* ("his painting/writing"). It is important to remember that Mayan languages do not make a distinction between writing and painting; both are considered the same creative activity. For the Maya, to record information in the Western sense of "write" is the same conceptual and artistic pursuit.

Stuart and Stephen Houston both have established that the *ts'ib* ("writing") component is replaced by the **lu**-Bat component (a bat head with an infixed sign representing the syllable lu) on carved vessels, the implication being that the latter glyph refers to carving the vessel although its phonetic reading remains problematic. Barbara MacLeod (1989) has established that "Manik Hand" reads either *hich* or *vich* and means "page" or "writing surface." MacLeod's studies of the verbs in the PSS conclude that the Lowland Mayan verbal suffixes *-bal*, *-nah* and *-nahil* are represented by the glyphs that follow *ts'ib*

[illegible] owners for [illegible] were made are [illegible]. It is reasonable to [illegible] their different [illegible] dissimilarity but close [illegible] as well as the presence [illegible] name on both vessels [illegible] were not made as a set. [illegible] may have been created by the same [illegible] in the same workshop but [illegible] different times or at least the pots were [illegible] in different mixtures of clays and tempers.

[illegible] Underscoring this interpretation of [illegible] the Closure phrases referring to the deceased nature of a vessel's patron, [illegible] vase from the southeast [illegible] on which a "canoe" glyph, otherwise shown to be a death verb, appears [illegible] PSS closure phrase (see K3230 in [illegible] Photographic Archive in New [illegible]).

[illegible] evidence from [illegible] Vista Hermosa and Buenavista [illegible] tomb in Copán in Honduras [illegible] body of the deceased was wrapped in cloth and jaguar skin prior [illegible] placed in the tomb or crypt [illegible] closes the upper text on MS0164. Lacking in the upper text is the quincunx or **bi**. The lower text ends with [illegible] followed by an eroded sign, this lower PSS seemingly ending with a prepositional phrase. Both of these are grammatically incomplete sentences because no owner of "his drinking vessel" is specified. Careful syntactic analysis of this and many other Uaxactun-style texts suggests that these PSS phrases are actually two sentences recording slightly different information but within the overall scheme of the PSS. The first ends with "his Uaxactun-style *hay*," recalling that *haval* refers to a basinlike vessel in Tzotzil Mayan. The second PSS translates as "(it is) his drinking vessel . . . (name)."

40. The Split-Sky sign, whose linguistic value is not known with certainty, is identical to the mainsign of the emblem glyph of the Uaxactún polity. Its presence on vessels that can be attributed to workshops located in the Uaxactún area support the identification of this glyph as a reference to the Uaxactún emblem glyph.

41. The vase is blessed by the main PSS painted around its rim.

42. It is possible that this PSS is grammatically correct and semantically appropriate but yet seems to be the creation of a less-than-literate artist/scribe. In the coming years, further glyphic decipherments may shed light on this strange PSS text.

43. On MS0040, Step has a *ma* superfix, which is an Early Classic feature. This *ma* may represent a middle voice suffix in a construction such as **huy-ma* ("became blessed").

44. After Schele and Miller (1986).

45. See Robicsek and Hales (1981) for a discussion of the Codex style, Reents and Bishop (1987) for a delimitation of the style and the provenience attribution for these pots, and Hansen, Bishop and Fahsen (1991) for discussions of the archaeologically identified provenience of the responsible workshops.

46. Exceptions always exist, and the Princeton Vase (MS1404) is the most notable example of one of the preeminent examples of Late Classic Maya pottery painting. And as noted in Chapter 3, archaeologist Richard Hansen (1993: personal communication) has excavated many potsherds painted in the Codex-style from household refuse deposits. This archaeological context strongly suggests that at least some Codex-style pottery was produced for everyday and other nonfunerary usage.

47. It should be noted that the Codex-style artists' dialect may have included some contact with Yucatecan speakers, suggested by the occasional use of the Yucatecan preposition *ti*. Perhaps the distribution of *ti* versus *ta* can be correlated with clay chemistry to yield different loci of production within the greater Nakbé area.

48. This is one of several cases where the Wing is deleted from Wing Quincunx. Although this is relatively uncommon, the repeated occurrence of the lack of the Wing sign raises the question of whether a word **ub* or **hub* may have meant "vase" in Cholan (*hobon* means "hollow cylinder" in Yucatec Mayan).

49. Vessels in this group were identified as "Codex-style Site C" by Robicsek and Hales (1981). See Reents-Budet, Bishop and Fahsen (n.d.) for a detailed analysis of this eastern Petén style group.

relatively correct in their repainted condition, the reader should exercise caution in using details of each glyph in further analyses.

21. There are a few rare substitutions in the Initial Sign, including another deity head and an earflare assemblage. Other even rarer glyphs of totally different composition remain unspecified. See MacLeod (n.d., 1990).

22. Linda Schele and Nikolai Grube and, independently, Stephen Houston and David Stuart suggest that the mirror has a value **tsu** and/or **tsuk**. In several other contexts in which the mirror glyph appears, *tsuk* ("partition") is an applicable meaning. However, the sequence *a tsuk-va* or *a-tsuk-i* is not a convincing reading for Initial Sign in the PSS. On the stone monuments, Initial Sign frequently introduces Distance Numbers or Calendar Round Dates, as well as introducing secondary clauses in sequence with known verbs such as "birth." Its position in these stelae texts and in the PSS strongly suggests that it is a verb.

Given these various potential readings, it is entirely possible that the mirror sign is one of a small number of confirmed polyvalent glyphs, that is, signs with two or more readings and/or meanings. Initial Sign may have originated in a non-Mayan language, given its occasional appearance on objects probably made by late pre-Classic Mixe-Zoquean speakers living to the north and west of the Maya in Mexico.

23. Barbara MacLeod and Nikolai Grube independently identified *hu* in the PSS.

24. There is a less common glyph composed of a skull (or a head with closed eye) with a "curling lock of hair" prefix, which appears to substitute for God N and Step-

[illegible] (MS 1973; Figure [illegible]). A similar curl sign in the Dresden Codex has been read *ha'* by Victoria Bricker [illegible]; perhaps this variant, which is a [illegible] sign, pots is another [illegible].

25. It is possible that [illegible] *yu'ha*, the [illegible] dropped by Mayan speakers [illegible] does not appear in the hieroglyph.

26. In those few instances where the possessed form *yu'h* appears in this [illegible] position, it is part of a phrase translated as "was blessed," "was painted," "its stirrup," "his drinking vessel." This makes good grammatical sense in Mayan, and one wonders why it wasn't used more often in the hieroglyphic texts.

27. The suffixes *-ib*, *-ab* and *-n-aab* are attested in Cholan; *'-naab* is a reasonable reconstruction. The alternative reading as *y-uch' ha'*, however, leaves out the expected instrumental suffix *-ab*.

28. Gourds were used as food service vessels during the Classic Period, as evidenced by the stack of painted gourds excavated from inside an adobe house structure at El Ceren, El Salvador (Beaubien, 1993). Gourds continue to be used today throughout Mesoamerica as a drinking vessel.

29. *UH* also is found in Tzeltal, Tzotzil and Yucatec Mayan, although it is probably a loan word into these languages from Cholan.

30. The glyphs *u bah-ti [illegible] tan* precede his name phrase (reading "goes to the black-dark place Lord Flint-Face"), suggesting that this vase was created as a funerary piece to accompany this elite person to the underworld. However, the issue is complicated by the fact that these glyphs also are part of a Naranjo rulership title sequence. Thus, here on the pottery, these glyphs may not be making reference to death and any funerary function of the pottery.

31. Here the emblem glyph [illegible] [illegible] suffixes. This [illegible] includes [illegible] "[illegible]" which suggests a [illegible] in a bordering [illegible] with Yaxchilan [illegible] species; thus the Yucatec [illegible] [illegible] attribution for this vase.

32. Artists' signatures are not restricted to [illegible]. At Naj Tunich Cave [illegible] introduces the name [illegible] who created [illegible] texts. The extensive [illegible] texts in the cave record that this [illegible] was a member of a clan or lineage [illegible] members were frequent visitors to the cave. Andrea Stone (1992) [illegible] *lu-Pa* ("incising and finishing" phrase) [illegible] stone monuments may name the sculptors who created these carvings. [illegible] Negras Stela 12 and Throne 1 of the King Stela, the Cleveland Stela and the [illegible] of the 96 Glyphs at Palenque [illegible] are the better-known examples. The [illegible] of these sculptors' signatures exactly parallels the painter's scribal signature.

33. Although the majority of artist's name phrases indicate a male dominant position, Michael Closs (1992) has identified one elite woman in the pottery corpus who carries painter's scribal [illegible].

34. The term *ch'ho'* [illegible] to be related to the Colonial [illegible] *ch'ojom* [illegible] do'l and to Chol [illegible].

35. This pottery was [illegible] restored in modern times. It [illegible] ion, however, that the glyphs [illegible] tively correctly repainted. The reader advised, however, to be cautious [illegible] specific glyphic elements.

36. It has been suggested that [illegible] these vessels [illegible] created together as a set [illegible] matching cylinder vase [illegible] same artist painted both [illegible].

5.1

Map of the Classic Maya area noting the probable locations of workshops where various painting styles were created.

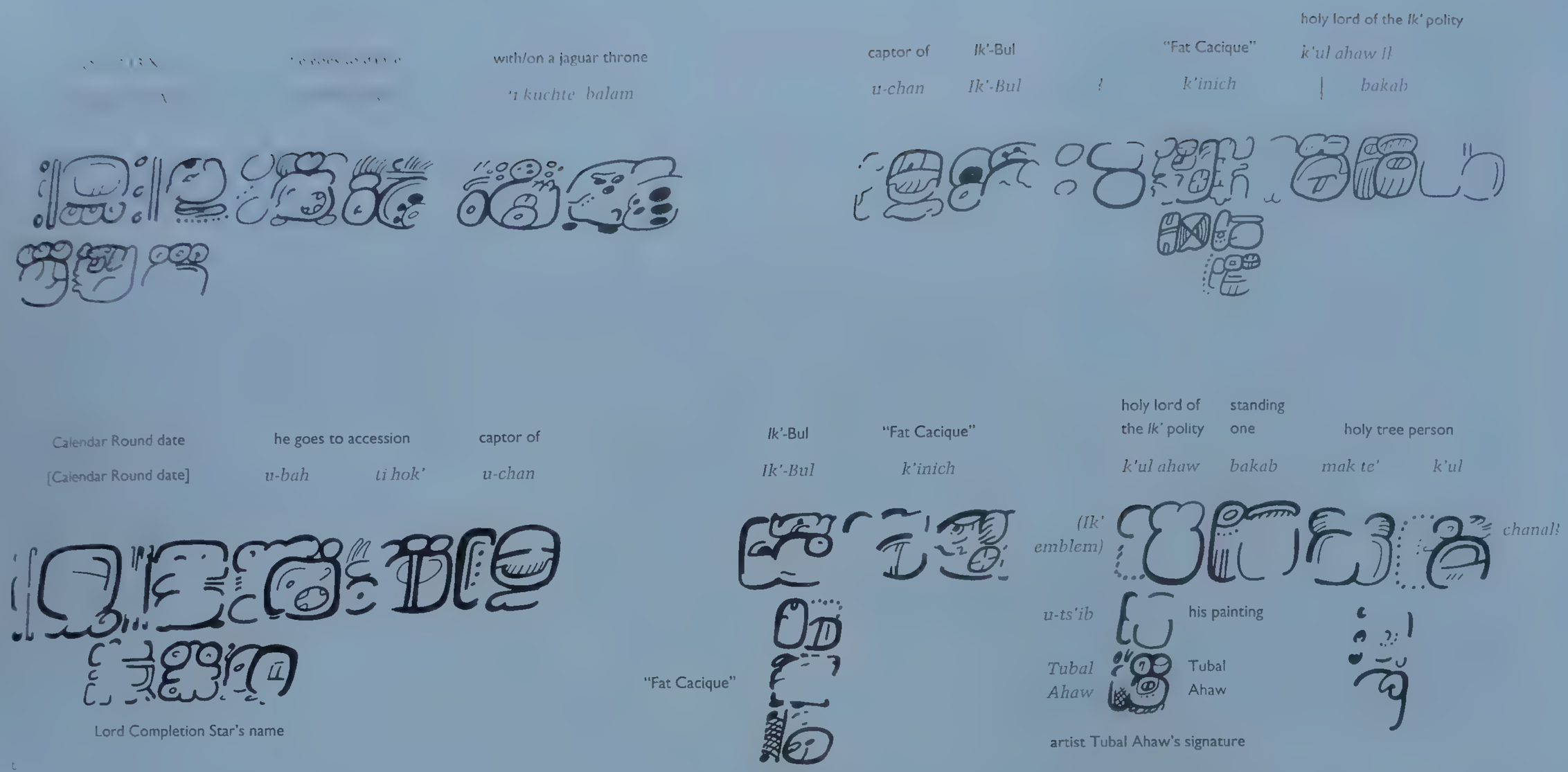
5. Painting Styles, Workshop Locations and Pottery Production

by Dorie Reents Budet, Ronald L. Bishop and Barbara MacLeod

Style functions as a visual index of social cohesiveness and thus is fundamental to the identity of every society, be it style of dress, speech, social interaction or the arts. For the pre-Columbian Maya the finely painted pottery played important roles on the sociopolitical stage during the Classic Period, and the many painting styles reflect this cultural identity function within the political arena. It follows that the identification of the numerous painting styles is integral to a modern reconstruction and understanding of Classic Maya civilization. By recognizing the pottery's many style groups and determining where they were created and used in pre-Columbian times, it is possible to outline political and social divisions and interaction across these boundaries.[1] By so doing, we can look at the intricate cultural fabric of this great civilization from a different perspective.

The questions of the specific components of style, as well as where style resides in art objects, have long been debated and there is still no consensus.[2] In the present study, style is considered to be a constellation of technical, formal, epigraphic and iconographic elements.[3] These attributes embody all the features discussed in Chapter 1. Attributes of production technology include vessel thickness, paste composition, surface finish, variations in paint hue, opacity and transparency and firing characteristics. Epigraphically and iconographically, variations in the hieroglyphic texts and idiosyncratic interpretations of the recurrent iconographic programs also help to distinguish one pottery style from another. Together these criteria represent the unique expression of a group of socially related ceramic artists, their patrons and other consumers of these artworks.

Maya polychrome pottery's primary use by archaeologists has been to establish a time framework for pre-Columbian Maya history.[4] Art historically, the painted pottery mainly has been analyzed as individual examples of painting artistry and as a yardstick for comparison with other cultures' painting traditions. However, this pottery can play a larger role in our investigations of Classic Maya civilization, especially in the realm of questions of cultural style.[5] Having amassed a large corpus of vessels in order to have broad representation of the Classic Period artistic output, one of the greatest hindrances to asking more questions of this pottery has been the lack of an independent analytical technique with which to confirm the various painting styles'



5.3

a. The non-PSS historical text on MS1121 (drawing by D. Reents-Budet).

b. The non-PSS historical text on MS1418 (drawing by D. Reents-Budet).

The Independent Technique: Paste Compositional Analysis by Neutron Activation Analysis

Classic Maya polychrome pottery represents a highly technical achievement indicative of specialized production. To produce consistent results in this labor intensive, technically difficult and culturally proscribed class of ceramics, the Maya potters and painters developed excellent control of their raw materials, ceramic paste and slip recipes, and firing procedures. To do so, the potters needed to maintain relative consistency throughout the production process from mixing clays to firing the finished vessels and, generally speaking, through time as well.

Anthropologist Dean Arnold's work among the contemporary Maya potters of Ticul, Yucatan, and Jeffrey Howry's research among the Chamula potters of highland Guatemala have identified the kind of idiosyncratic and consistent production methods needed to produce successful pottery.[6] Both authors discuss the potters' persistent use of particular raw clay resources and their proportionally consistent mixtures of clays and tempers to create an acceptable clay body. These paste recipes

5.2 MS1121; *Ik'*-style Group 1

The ruler of the *Ik'* site nicknamed the "Fat Cacique" dances as/with an arching jaguar and wears a ritual costume that includes a full head mask rendered in "x-ray" fashion. (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Landon T. Clay. Still photograph courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).

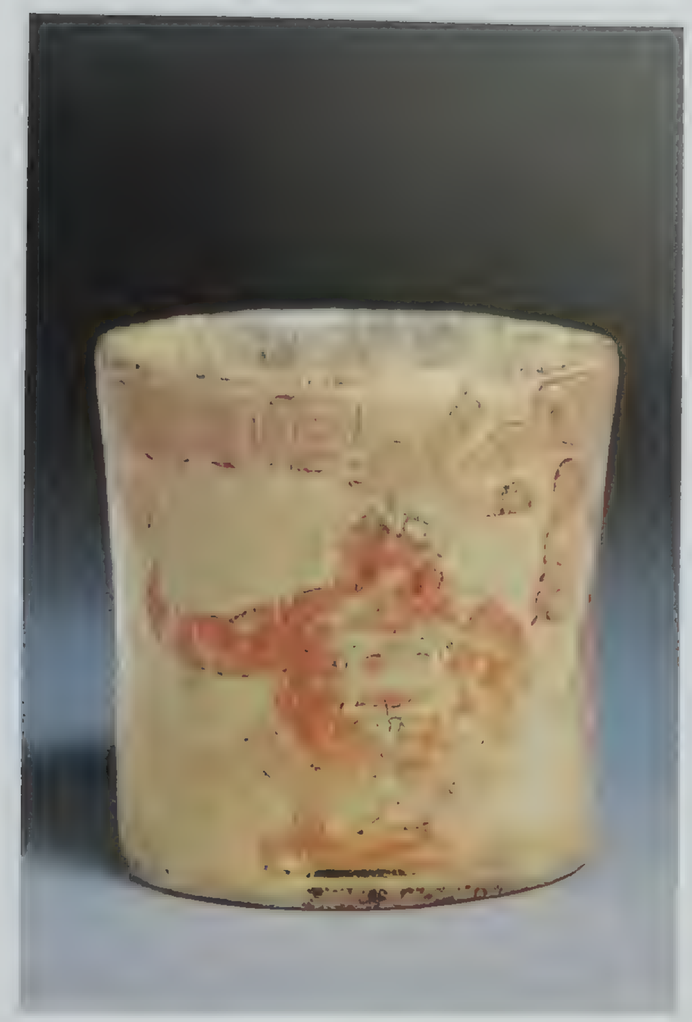
identification as the artistic expression of a specific group of ceramicists. Also lacking has been an empirical means by which we could connect a painting style with a geographic area or archaeological site. That is, although one could suggest that two similar-looking pots were made in the same place, this could not be confirmed nor could the place be identified. The determination of geographic locations for the workshops that produced each of the myriad pottery styles is especially important because the majority of whole vessels, from which painting styles are identified, are without provenience: we do not know where the pottery was made or found. And even if a vessel has been excavated scientifically, the site where the pot was found cannot be assumed to be the same as that where it was created (see Chapter 3). The application of neutron activation analysis to Classic Maya painted pottery provides an independent investigative technique that allows for the confirmation of stylistically defined groups as representing the creations of socially related artists and of suggesting the geographic locations of their workshops (Figure 5.1).

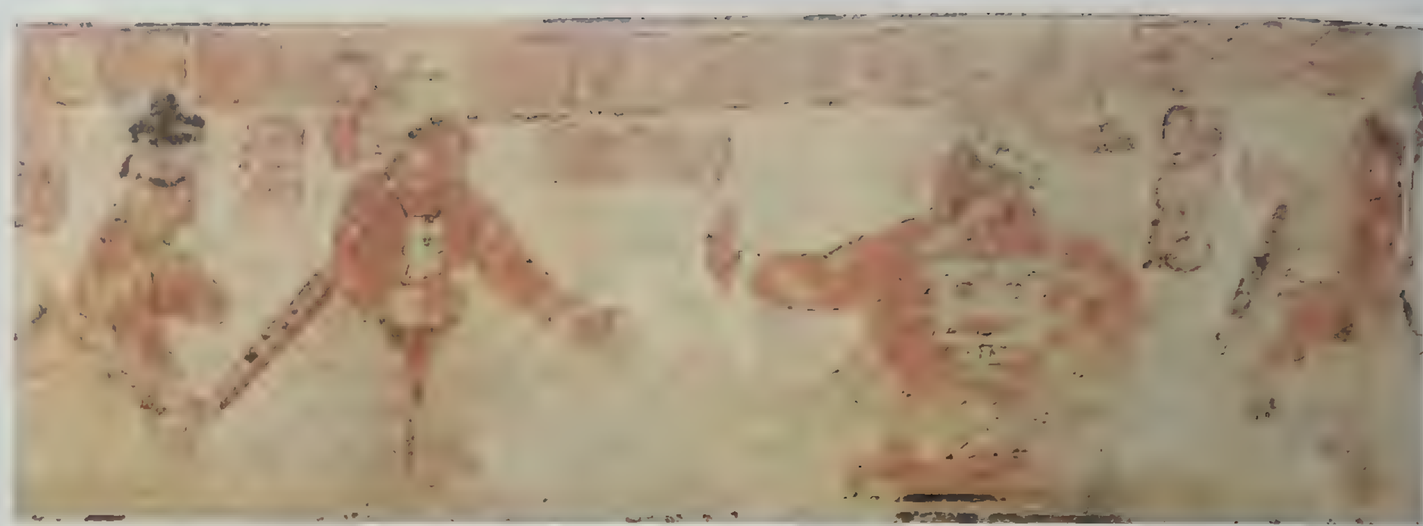
The Maya Polychrome Ceramics Project, Conservation Analytical Laboratory, Smithsonian Institution, was created to investigate Classic Maya painted pottery production, combining both stylistic and chemical analyses to identify individual styles of Classic Period painted pottery and the locations of the workshops or communities where they were produced. The project was made possible through the use of the highly sensitive technique of Instrumental Neutron Activation Analysis (INAA). This technique permits many elemental constituents to be determined simultaneously with good precision, several of which can be determined at or below the parts-per-million level. Such sensitivity is required in order to discover those paste compositional differences that reflect the use of different clay resources within a fairly small geographical area.

Simply stated, the analytical technique of neutron activation involves the exposure of atomic nuclei in a pottery paste sample to a source of neutrons. Certain atomic nuclei capture neutrons and are elevated to a higher energetic state, producing radioactive isotopes. These energetic radioisotopes decay to stable nuclei, some emitting radiation in the form of gamma rays. The emitted gamma rays can be detected, counted and sorted by their respective energies, which are specific for the various radioisotopes. By comparing the emissions from the unknown sample with those from a sample of reference material containing known elemental concentrations, the amount of certain elemental constituents in the unknown ceramic paste can be calculated. Several extensive discussions of the technique of INAA are published elsewhere and will not be reproduced here. Suffice it to say that the Maya Polychrome Ceramics Project generally follows the established procedures discussed in these publications.[8]

The analyses of the several nonprovenienced vessels in the *Ik'*-style corpus serve as an example of our analytical process wherein one or more compositionally similar groups of samples (taken from whole vessels and potsherds) are formed and are inferred to represent the ceramic production of a site or area, the statistical likelihood being ascertained of a nongrouped sample belonging to the defined group. We begin by calculating the generalized statistical distance of each of the stylistically defined *Ik'* group members (whole vessels and potsherds) to the group centroid and the probability that a sample is a member of the group.[9] Using eleven elements, the chemical profile for each analyzed potsherd or nonprovenienced *Ik'*-style vessel is compared, one at a time, against the elemental data for almost ten thousand analyses of Maya pottery, including potsherds retrieved from known archaeological sites.

If, through this process, fifteen to twenty additional specimens are selected from the data base by their having a high "probability" of being similar to the reference specimen, this suggests that we have identified pottery made from similar paste recipes by potters mining a specific clay resource. An *Ik'* production trial group can be formed and more rigorous statistical evaluation can take place. If these specimens share stylistic features, we can suggest that these specimens are the products of a specific group of potters most probably located in the same area.



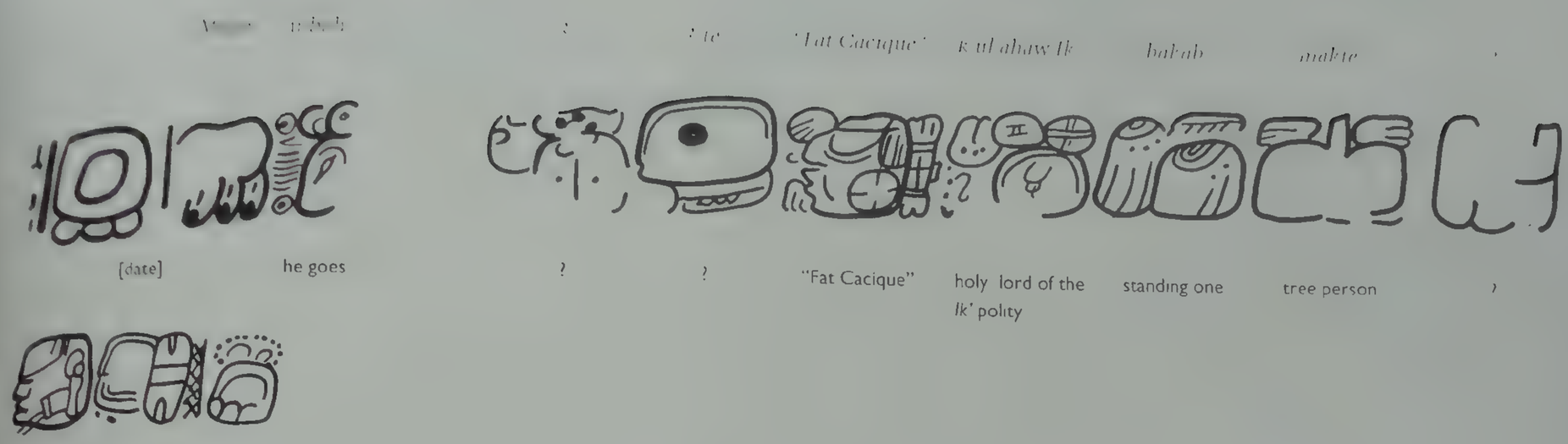


5.4 MS1418; *Ik'* Group 1

This vase, painted by the so-called "Master of the Pink Glyphs," painted his name next to the kneeling figure on the left. The text records the event as the accession of the "Fat Cacique," attended by Lord Completion-Star (depicted on the left gesturing toward the new ruler).

are specific to these potters, and thus their ceramic products can be distinguished chemically from those of other pottery producers in the respective areas. Applying these data to an archaeological situation, pottery that shares a distinct paste compositional profile should represent the output of a group of potters working closely together within one community and possibly even within one workshop.

Raymond Thompson's anthropological research among Maya potters in northern Yucatan has identified variations in the pottery from a number of contemporary communities. Each community's ceramics are characterized not only by a specific constellation of paste compositional features, but also by attributes of vessel shape and surface decoration.[7] Applying Thompson's discoveries to the archaeological record, a group of visually similar pottery vessels whose paste composition is equally homogeneous should represent the artistic production of a particular group of professional ceramicists creating pottery in a face-to-face production environment in the same community and possibly even in the same workshop. Therefore, an analysis of archaeological pottery that examines both its stylistic features and its subtle differences in paste should be able to identify the products of specific areas, communities and workshops. It also should be possible to identify the areas where the workshops were located vis-à-vis known archaeological sites.



5.6

The historical text painted on MS1419 (drawing by D. Reents-Budet).

ment of still others from those regions discussed below, plus their art historical, epigraphic and chemical characterization, will take years to complete given the richness of the Classic Period ceramic corpus.

The seven painting styles described here represent both local and regional styles that are the material expression of varying degrees of social and political integration among the pottery's makers and consumers. Their painted imagery recounts historical and ritual events, cosmological beliefs and the epic tales of Maya religion. This thematic variability reflects the vessels' specific uses as well as being stylistic features that are regionally and sometimes locally sensitive. These seven style groups also have been chosen because they represent production for both elite and intermediate elite (the so-called Maya "middle class") consumers.

5.5 MS1419; *Ik'* Group 2

A bloodletting ritual dance takes place to commemorate a historical event whose main participant appears to be the "Fat Cacique" because his titles comprise the nominal phrase at the top of the vase. The artist who painted this vase does not exhibit the same mastery of the medium as does *Tubal Ahaw* (cf. MS1121; figures 5.2 and 5.4). *Also see catalog 49.*

Classic Period Painting Styles

Style is highly relative and always is affected by the comparative corpus from which it is identified.[10] In the case of the Classic Maya pictorial pottery, we are in the early stages of painting style identification and the definition of the corpus still is being formed.[11] The styles presented here represent about 10 percent of the styles we have recognized during fifteen years of research. These styles have been chosen because they provide a geographically and stylistically broad overview of the diverse creativity of Maya pottery painters and because they represent both localized and regional painting traditions.[12] Many more styles were created by the Maya pottery painters from regions not represented by these seven styles, including those from the southern regions of Quintana Roo and Campeche in Mexico, southern Belize and the adjacent areas in Guatemala, the central Usumacinta River region, and the far northern and northeastern reaches of the Petén (cf. the Codex-style pottery discussed in chapters 1 and 2). The recognition of the pottery styles from these regions and the refine-

[illegible] hun-[illegible] [illegible] ba-nahal [illegible] which the bat [illegible] and **ti** before *v-utal* [illegible]

The *Ik'* corpus can be divided into at least five painting styles that probably reflect the geographic breadth of the *Ik'* polity, the socioeconomic positions of its consumers and stylistic variability caused by time (these vessels were made around A.D. 750–850).[17] Although an overview of the styles can be presented, we must await archaeological work in the region in order to define how these styles relate to, and are reflections of, the dynamic sociopolitical environment during the Late Classic Period.[18] As a group of vessels without provenience, however, they are useful as historical information sources and as indicators of relationships.

Within each of the five main *Ik'*-styles, there is a broad range of quality of the painted imagery in terms of the execution of the painting itself and in the sophistication of the pictorial compositions and the accompanying hieroglyphic texts. The corpus includes the works of two master painters, one creating for the "Fat Cacique" (figures 5.2 and 5.4) and one for Lord Completion-Star (figures 5.9 and 5.10). The "Fat Cacique" is immediately recognizable in the pictorial scenes by his corpulence, stern facial demeanor, slanting eyes and delicate hands and feet, his consistent and unique depiction implying portraiture. On other *Ik'* vases, portraiture is absent and some of the depicted people are not identified hieroglyphically (cf. K534; Figure 5.7). This range from personal portraiture to unnamed participants, and the highly variable painting quality among the scores of *Ik'*-style pottery, may indicate that these vessels were produced for people who occupied various levels among the Maya elite of the *Ik'* region.[19]

5.8 MS1134; *Ik'* Group 3

The dense black color of the flamboyant feathers worn by the dancers and the orange background color characterize this group (photograph by Butch Usery).

5.7 K534; *Ik'* Group 3

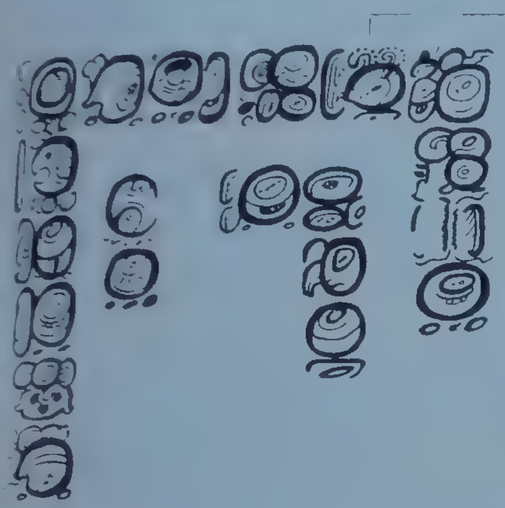
Individualistic portraiture is absent on this vase even though the dancer on the left is identified glyphically by the same titles as the "Fat Cacique" (compare with figures 5.3a and 5.3b) and the figure on the right is a divine person.

The Ik' *Emblem Glyph Styles: A Regional Ceramic Tradition*

The *Ik'* Emblem Glyph corpus of elite pictorial pottery was first identified by the presence of the *Ik'* emblem glyph in the hieroglyphic texts painted on these pots (figures 5.2 and 5.3a, b). The archaeological site of Motul de San José, located in the central Petén lowlands of Guatemala on the western side of Lake Petén-Itzá (Figure 5.1), is the most likely candidate for the *Ik'* emblem glyph site and for the location of some of the workshops where some of these pots were created.[13] To date, the *Ik'* corpus includes more than thirty-eight vessels, and the stylistic and chemical diversity among them suggests that the responsible workshops were located at more sites than Motul de San José. If the locations of these pots' workshops could be established, these data could assist in determining the geographic extent of the *Ik'* polity during the eighth century A.D. The diversity in the corpus also suggests that this style prevailed for more than one generation. The *Ik'*-style is characterized by its historical subject matter, recording sociopolitical and ritual events enacted by such rulers as the "Fat Cacique" (Figure 5.2) and Lord Completion-Star and their subordinate dignitaries from throughout the polity.[14]

Other characteristics of the *Ik'*-style vessels include a bright white background, black-painted rims with a scallop motif embellishing the inside of the rims, and glyphs outlined in a dark rose color and sometimes filled with a lighter and more translucent pink wash. Interestingly, the *Ik'*-style seems to be represented only by vases and flat-bottomed dishes with outflaring walls. Notably absent are plate forms, strongly suggesting a specialized function for these vessels.[15]

Hieroglyphic texts provide additional details of the depicted events, including the names of the participants, the kinds of events that took place and the dates on which they occurred. The historical texts often feature the act of dancing and employ the construction *u-bah ti ahk'ot ti* . . . ("he goes to dance with/on . . .") (cf. Figure 5.3a). Correspondingly, the Primary Standard Sequence is absent or ancillary to the primary part of the text. When present, the PSS's consistent idiosyncracies confirm the unity of the *Ik'* painting tradition (cf. groups 4 and 5; figures 5.9, 5.10, 5.11 and 5.12). For example, the PSS employs the rare substitution *y-uch'-naab* for the Wing-Quincunx (usually *y-uch'ab*), resulting in a noun meaning "his cup for drinking" (e.g., MS1373, K791, and the Altar de Sacrificios Vase; figures 5.10 and 5.11a). Other characteristics include the



a

The *Ik'* corpus is chemically discernible from all other sampled pottery in the chemical data base. Potsherds from Motul de San José have similar chemical compositions to the *Ik'* corpus whole vessels, helping to identify this site as one of the locations of the pottery workshops (Figure 5.1). Although we have insufficient chemical sampling of pottery in the vicinity to suggest other specific locations for the responsible workshops, the elemental deviations of the group are considerably larger than the better-characterized (both stylistically and chemically) pottery groups from other areas of the Maya lowlands (for example, the Altun Ha-style pottery discussed below). In addition, there is a tendency for subclustering within the *Ik'* group. These chemical tendencies are consonant with the stylistic spread and together imply one or all of the following interpretations: there were multiple workshops located in different parts of the *Ik'* polity area; the ceramic artists were exploiting discernibly different clay resources and mixtures; and these vessels represent *Ik'* area production over a few generations.[20]

Ik' Group 1 includes the works of the Master of the Pink Glyphs, named for his use of pink and rose-colored hieroglyphs. This artist also renders the full head masks worn by the depicted dancers in an unusual "x-ray" manner in which the dancer's head is visible inside the mask (cf. figures 5.2 and 5.4).[21] This artist painted at least four pots for the "Fat Cacique"; the scenes and texts record events associated with his accession rituals (figures 5.3a, b).[22] The master artist signed two of the vases (cf. MS1418; figures 5.3b, 5.4 and Figure 2.29). Another elite male, Lord Completion-Star, participates in the "Fat Cacique's" rituals (Figure 5.4). Because he takes a subsidiary position to the "Fat Cacique," Lord Completion-Star may be a secondary lord from the *Ik'* polity. We see him again as the patron of, and enthroned lord on, MS1373 (Figure 5.9).

b

5.11

a The hieroglyphic text on MS1373 (drawing by D. Reents-Budet). *Also see catalog 18.*

b The artist's signature on K791 (drawing by Barbara MacLeod).

5.9 MS1373; *Ik'* Group 4

Lord Completion-Star sits on a throne inside a palace, its curtains tied open along the roof line just below the rim text. He receives a tribute payment from the elite *ahaws* seated on the floor. *Also see catalog 48*

5.10 K791; *Ik'* Group 4

This vase's highly unusual calligraphic style, complex pictorial program, use of pictorial space and clear strong palette that also includes delicate color washes matches those of MS1373 (Figure 5.9). Both must be the work of one master artist.

Ik' Group 2 shares the style's historical imagery, including the sacrificial and transformation dance and vision quest rituals, associated with accession rites, although the painting quality is not as high as in Group 1 (cf. MS1419; Figure 5.5).[23] The hieroglyphic text on MS1419 names the "Fat Cacique" as the main protagonist of the scene; he is probably the dancer wearing the large circular backrack (depicted twice), although his characteristic portraiture is absent (Figure 5.6).[24] *Ik'* Group 3 shares with Group 2 a similar use of pictorial space and iconographic programs, black basal and rim bands, pink- and rose-hued hieroglyphs, and costumes flamboyantly embellished with long black feathers (cf. figures 5.7 and 5.8).[25] This group is distinguished by an orange background color and less-elegant renderings of the human figures.

Ik' Group 4 is noteworthy for its outstanding calligraphy and orange-hued glyphs (MS1373 and K791; figures 5.9 and 5.10). The texts are a combination of the PSS and historical commentary. The unusually complex use of pictorial space and the beautifully painted hieroglyphs strongly imply the work of one master painter whose name is found on K791 (Figure 5.11b). MS1373 records the tribute payment by a secondary lord to the enthroned Lord Completion-Star (figures 5.9 and 5.11a), its PSS text noting that Lord Completion-Star "goes to the holy station of *Hun-Ahaw*" (*u bah k'ul kun Hun-Ahaw*), which may be either a death or ballgame reference. Other vessels in the group record transformation ritual dances (cf. K791; Figure 5.10). Rather than indicating the dancers' transformations into supernatural co-essences by their wearing masks depicting the co-essence, as seen on MS1121, here the glyphic texts next to each participant include the name of his supernatural co-essence.[26]

5.12 MS0445; *Ik'* Group 5

The pictorial and hieroglyphic texts record a historical event taking place inside a palace. The enthroned lord is called an artist/sage in his title phrase in the PSS, which ends with the naming of his father *Sac-Muan*, a holy lord of the *Ik'* polity. The texts in the scene describe the event as including a ritual dance as well as naming the participants. The artist placed his name behind the throne.

Also see catalog 40.

are noteworthy in consideration of this last function, however, and may imply subtle differences in the reasons underlying their creation as well as the ways in which this pottery was manipulated.[30] The *Ik'* vessels comprise a unique historical record because the carved stone monuments from this region either are eroded or uncarved.[31] If not for these ceramics, then, we would have lost these names, portraits and historical events from the *Ik'* polity.

The Holmul Style: A Regional Style

Unlike the *Ik'*-style vessels, Holmul-style pottery was produced for a wider range of Late Classic Maya consumers—from rulers to the lower echelons of Maya society (figures 5.14–5.27). Further, Holmul-style pottery differs from the *Ik'* tradition in that it represents ceramic production from a very broad region located in eastern Guatemala and western Belize. The style is named for the site of Holmul, Guatemala, where vessels painted in this style were first excavated in 1911 (figures 5.1 and 5.14).[32] Holmul-style pottery is characterized by a red-and-orange-on-cream palette with varying amounts of an opaque black slip highlighting particular parts of the imagery and the exteriors of plates. Vessel forms include cylinder vases, dishes and the *hawte'* plate form with tall tripod supports. The style relies heavily upon detached contour lines as the convention for depicting human figural forms. The Holmul dancer theme is the primary pictorial program found on these vessels, although the style also includes renderings of cormorants surrounded by water motifs and a dignitary (presumably an *ahaw*, or lord) seated on a throne (cf. MS0606 and MS0605; figures 5.22 and 5.16).[33]

Holmul-style vessels are painted with hieroglyphic texts that either are readable PSS phrases or repetitions of pseudoglyphs (cf. MS1010 and MS0605; figures 5.15 and 5.20). Short vertical texts extend from the rim text band into the pictorial plane on those vessels painted with the Holmul dancer theme. These short phrases usually name the supernatural characters (some of which are known co essences) seated within the dancers' elaborate backracks.[34]

Hundreds of whole vessels painted in this Holmul-style are known. Stylistically and chemically, they can be divided roughly into two groups (figures 5.14–5.17 and 5.18–5.21) with many outlying examples whose provenience attributions remain undefined (figures 5.22, 5.23 and 5.27).[35] One group shares similarities of painting style, iconography and epigraphy, including an idiosyncratic version of the *na-ha* portion of the PSS, and is associated with ceramic production at Holmul based on paste chemistry and archaeological data (MS1010, MS0605 and MS1125; figures 5.14–5.17). The typical Holmul area text, such as that on plate MS1010, reads *ay-a hoy-i u-ts'ib nahal u lak* (or *y-a-ha-ha*, depending on vessel shape) *ta tsih te'el kakaw* (or "it came into being, was blessed, its painting, his plate for the fresh cacao" (Figure 5.15). This is standard PSS parlance written in an unequivocally Cholan language. Tangential to this group is the unique chip and dip tripod plate (MS0605; Figure 5.16), whose lengthy hieroglyphic text calls it both a *y-uch-ab* ("drinking cup") and a *hawte'*. Its long nominal phrase includes some of the same titles found on MS1010 (see Figure 4.12). The stylistic and chemical

5.13 MS0334; *Ik'* Group 5

Vases in this group share with *Ik'* Groups 1 and 2 the pink- and rose-hued hieroglyphs and historical imagery. The text states that part of the commemorated event includes a dance ritual. The seated participants are identified by the vertical hieroglyphic texts, which include the elite honorific title *ahaw* ("divine lord"). *Also see catalog 50.*

Group 5 is more of a catchall category than a cohesive stylistic unit, the vases in the group ranging from the finest painting to works of less-accomplished artists (cf. MS0445 and MS0334; figures 5.12 and 5.13). The vases' chemical and stylistic diversity suggests a spatial and temporal broadening of the style. These vessels probably represent the products of workshops whose connections with the *Ik'* polity and its elite ceramic production are less direct and whose artists were responding more to regional artistic and social forces.[27] Some vessels have the *Ik'* emblem glyph in their texts (cf. MS0445; Figure 5.12), and all are painted with historical imagery that includes transformational dance rituals and other palace gatherings.[28] MS0445 is a unique vase whose high calcium content renders it chemically different from all other *Ik'* vessels. Its PSS uses the unusual GI form of Initial Sign and a distinctive form of Flat Hand followed by *hich*. The text ends with the name of its owner/patron, whose titles include artist/sage and the name of his father (*Sac-Muan*) who is noted as being a holy lord (*k'ul ahaw*) of the *Ik'* site (Figure 5.12; also see discussion in Chapter 4).[29] The painter signed MS0445 behind the enthroned ruler, his signature phrase beginning with the usual *u-ts'ib* ("his painting").

The *Ik'*-style represents a subset of Late Classic pictorial polychrome pottery produced in and around Motul de San José. These vessels probably served as burial offerings, social currency and elite service ware. The absence of plate forms and the scarcity of the PSS

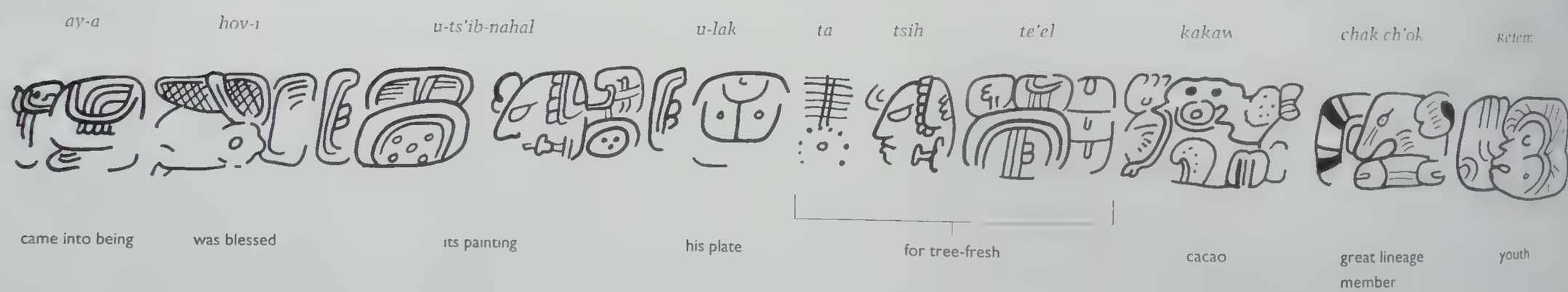
variability within this group suggests that more workshops than those located at Holmul produced these vessels. It is likely that many of the sites located in the area probably were creating their own interpretations of the Holmul-style.

A second group is associated with the site of Naranjo—based on chemical similarity with pottery excavated at the site and on the presence of the Naranjo emblem glyph in their texts (MS0038, MS0758, MS1374 and probably MS1416; figures 5.18–5.21, 5.27). The Naranjo group artists rely more on the use of hue contrast to define shapes than on contour lines, as is characteristic of the Holmul vessels. MS1374 (Figure 5.21) is painted by the same master artist who painted the stylistically different MS1375 and Vase of the Seven Gods (compare *Ah-Maxam*'s calligraphy on these three vases; Figure 5.24).[36] Not surprisingly, the vases are chemically equivalent and similar to potsherds found at Naranjo. *Ah-Maxam*'s signature phrase on MS1375 ends with the names of his royal parents, Lady *Yaxhá* and Lord "Flint-Face." The owner/patron of the vase may be a close relative of the king because this same "Flint-Face" nominal is found in his name phrase. Additional glyphic evidence tying this group to Naranjo includes the occasional use of the alternative "vase" term, *y-uch'naab*, which characterizes pottery from this region (Figure 4.20).[37]

A new group of stylistically and chemically distinct pottery recently has been found at the site of Buenavista del Cayo, Belize (Figure 5.25). Archaeologists Jennifer Taschek and Joseph Ball have discovered an elite resi-

5.16 MS0605 (*above*)
This unusual "chip-and-dip" *hawte'* plate was painted by a master artist who created an exceptionally embellished depiction of the Holmul dancer. The extensive hieroglyphic text concludes with the name and titles of the elite *ahaw* for whom the plate was made, many of which also are found on plate MSH019 (5.26). *Also see catalog 18.*

5.17 (*left*)
MS1125; a Holmul-style vase made in a workshop located in the Naranjo area.



5.14 MSH019

This plate was excavated from an elite burial at Holmul, Guatemala. The black-on-white geometric designs on the exterior of the plate are typical of the style. This plate form is a *hawte'*, that is, a flat-bottomed plate with tall cylindrical supports. (From the collection of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Photograph courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College Photograph by Hillel Burger.)

5.15

A typical PSS from the Holmul-style pottery (from MSH019; drawing by D. Reents-Budet)

5.18

MS0038; a Holmul-style vase made in a workshop located in the Naranjo area. *Also see catalog 52.*

5.19

The hieroglyphic text painted on MS0038, a vase made in the vicinity of Naranjo (drawing by Reents-Budet).

The Holmul-style pottery's broad chemical and stylistic variability indicates a regional style created in workshops located at many sites. The death and underworld association of much of the imagery implies a funerary role.[40] However, the nonunderworld iconography found on some Holmul-style pottery (such as the image of a seated Maya lord), and the use-wear patterns seen on many vessels imply more than a funerary function. Further, the documented use of some of these vessels as regal gifts (cf. MS1416; see Chapter 7) points to the pottery first serving the living as service ware and in the political arena prior to ending its service in the burials of the deceased.[41]

5.23 MS1127

This large Holmul-style vase does not match the known pottery produced at Holmul and Naranjo. Its orange-tinted cream background color is unusual, as is the vase's shape and large size. *Also see catalog 51.*

5.20

MS0758; a Holmul-style vase made in a workshop located in the Naranjo area. Its poorly painted imagery and low-quality ceramic suggest production for a lower-tiered elite consumer audience (photo by Ronald L. Bishop)

5.21

MS1374; Holmul-style pottery made at Naranjo. This vase was painted by *Ah-Maxam*, the son of the Naranjo ruler nicknamed Lord "Flint-Face." The elite patron(s) for whom it was made carries in his name phrase the same titles as those of the ruler and thus must be a member of the royal family. *Also see catalog 9.*

5.22 MS0606

Cormorants encircle this vase, whose text records its owner/patron as an *ahaw* who probably lived in the Holmul-Naranjo area. However, his name is preserved nowhere else. *Also see catalog 71.*

5.20

5.21

5.22

dential compound that includes an extensive refuse pile of hundreds of thousands of sherds painted in the Holmul-style; this elite residence is possibly the location of a Holmul-style pottery workshop. The pottery style group is characterized by lesser-quality painting, seen particularly in the sloppily rendered figures and the general lack of PSS phrases and other readable texts. These characteristics suggest that the Buenavista workshop was making pottery for lower-tier elite consumption and mostly likely for local use.[38]

In contrast to such masterpieces as MSH019, MS1374 and MS1416 (figures 5.14, 5.21 and 5.27), whose PSS texts indicate they were created for specific elite individuals (Figure 5.26a, b), and similar to the Buenavista-produced pottery, most Holmul-style vessels are characterized by less-accomplished brush work and pictorial compositional abilities. Their texts lack extensive PSS definition and only rarely included patrons/owners' and artists' names. More usual are rim texts comprised of pseudoglyphs (cf. figures 5.18 and 5.20). This lesser quality suggests that these vessels were intended for a broader segment of Maya society lying outside the uppermost elite, a segment whose social and economic positions did not provide the mechanisms for acquiring finely painted and personalized elite wares. The large quantity of this pottery correlates with the far greater numbers of people occupying the intermediary elite and even lower echelon of Maya society, in contrast to those few at the pinnacle of power. The majority of these Holmul-style vessels probably were created for these consumers, who may be considered as the Classic Period version of a middle class.[39]

The Turkey Vulture Plates: A Regional and Functional Style

The so-called "Turkey Vulture" pottery tradition is a regional style similar to the *Ik'* corpus. It differs from the *Ik'* and the Holmul corpus in that its imagery repeats a single iconographic theme, lacks hieroglyphic texts and is represented only by plates. These characteristics suggest that the Turkey Vulture pottery did not result from purely elite patronage but instead was created for a broad audience and had a very specific functional niche.

The tradition is characterized by restricted iconographic programs featuring underworld themes and a restricted palette (red and black on orange, with orange backgrounds for the primary imagery on the plates' interior bottoms and sometimes black backgrounds on the interior walls). Unlike the Holmul-style corpus, however, one of the distinguishing features of the Turkey Vulture-style is that it is comprised exclusively of plates (figures 5.28–5.30). As such, these plates certainly represent only a small portion of the Late Classic polychrome ceramic production at the sites where they were produced and used. These plates are a subset of the archaeological ceramic type called Cui Orange-polychrome, which is associated with the early Late Classic ceramic assemblages from northern Campeche and southwestern Yucatan (in Maya long count dates ca. 9.8.0.0.0–9.15.0.0.0, or A.D. 593–731).[42]

Turkey Vulture plates may be mostly a funerary ware because they are found almost exclusively in burial contexts and are painted with death and underworld images.[43] The most frequently found image is an idiosyncratic representation of the mythological Muan bird, the avian messenger of the lords of the underworld.[44] Usually the Muan bird is painted on the bottom of the plate, surrounded by a saurian creature swimming in the black waters of the underworld that are depicted on the interior walls of the plates (Figure 5.30). The Muan bird wears a diadem around its neck, embellished with a *cimi*, or "death," sign (Figure 5.30). The artists' interpretations of the imagery range from highly curvilinear to geometric (compare MS1425 and MS0548; figures 5.28 and 5.29). Although profile views of the bird predominate (cf. MS1425 and K12; figures 5.28 and 5.30), frontal depictions do occur Figure 5.29 and catalog 64).

These plates lack the dedicatory and personalizing PSS text.[45] The absence of any hieroglyphs on these plates, their highly repetitive imagery and the relatively large quantities of the plates imply production for a wider consumer base than is generally assumed for Late

5.24

The royal artist *Ah-Maxam* created one of the most impressive and recognizable calligraphic styles of the Late Classic Period

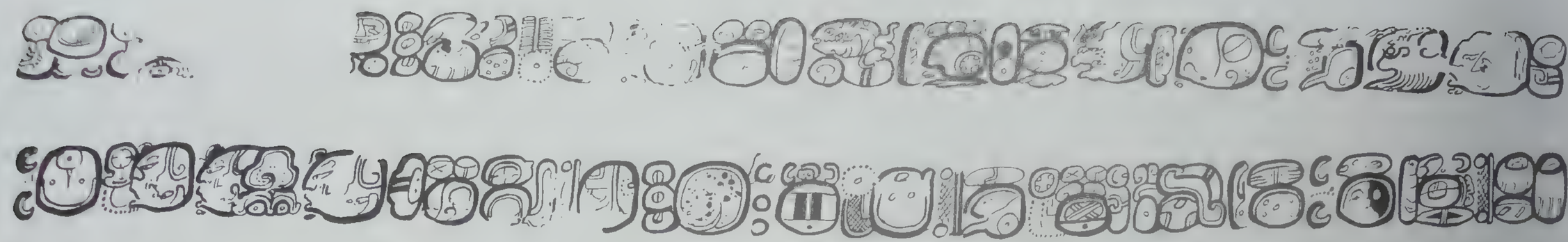
a. MS1375. *Also see catalog 10*

b. Vase of the Seven Gods (K2796). *Also see catalog 11*

c. MS1374. *Also see catalog 9.*

5.25

This dish is characteristic of the Holmul-style pottery produced at Buenavista. Compare the cormorant's poor rendering with that on MS0606 (5.22) (photo by D. Reents-Budet).



5.24a

5.24b

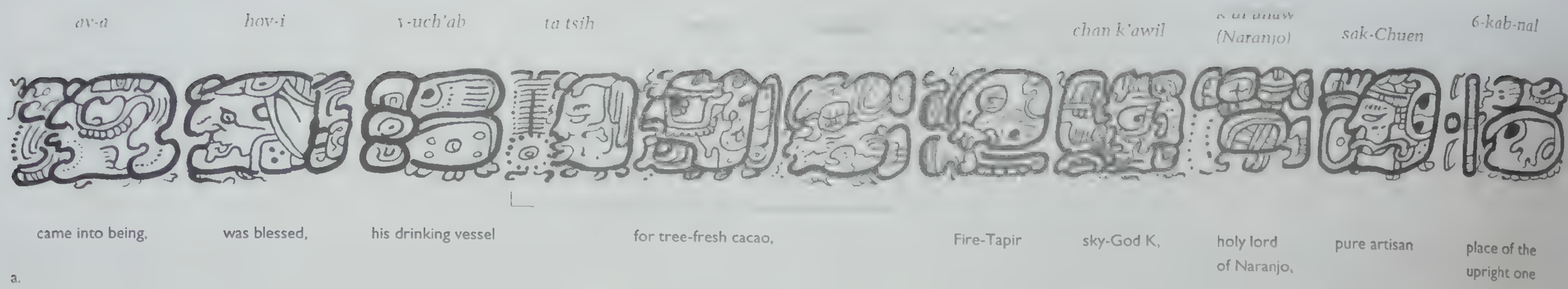
5.24c

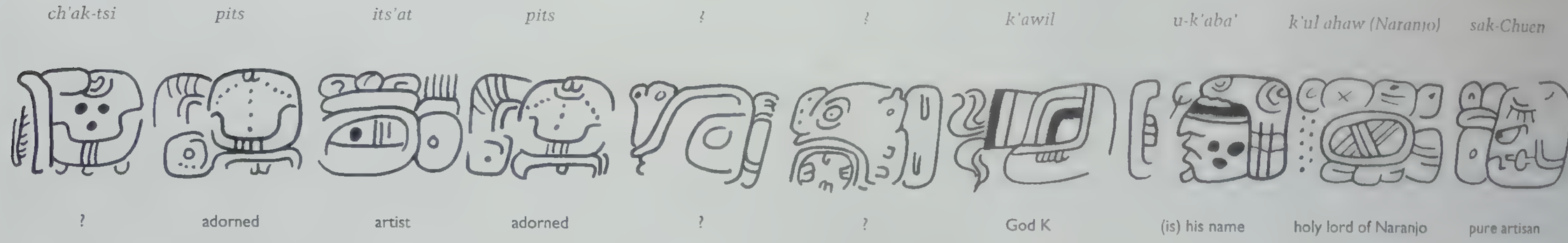
5.27 MS1416 (*above*)

The Buenavista Vase was created for Lord K'ak'-*Til*, a powerful ruler of Naranjo, Guatemala. The vase was found in the burial of a royal adolescent male at Buenavista, Belize, indicating a political function beyond that of only a funerary offering.
Also see catalog 95.

5.28 MS1425 (*right*)

A typical so-called "Turkey Vulture" plate, whose main icon is the supernatural Muan bird surrounded by a saurian creature. This Turkey Vulture plate probably was made at Santa Rosa Xtampak, located in northeastern Campeche, Mexico. *Also see catalog 63.*





5.26

The names of historical people are recorded in the PSS phrases on a few Holmul-style vessels.

a. MS1416. Lord *K'ak'-Til* of Naranjo. *Also see catalog 95.*

b. MSH019. An *ahaw* from the same Naranjo royal family as Lord *K'ak'-Til* is the owner/patron of this plate found at Holmul. His name glyphs have yet to be deciphered (drawing by D. Reents-Budet).

Classic pictorial pottery. Unlike the *Ik'*-style vases and some of the Holmul-style vessels, these plates seem not to have been commissioned by individual rulers and their immediate colleagues for their personal sociopolitical and funerary use.

Turkey Vulture plates have been excavated from sites in northern Campeche (e.g., Huaymil, Jaina Island, Santa Rosa Xtampak, Dzibilnocac and Edzná) and the western half of Yucatan (e.g., Dzibilchaltún, Acanceh and Becanchén) (Figure 5.1). The chemical profiles of all sampled plates point to the Campeche sites as the most likely locations of the workshops where they were created. Plates found in northern Yucatan and at sites along the Campeche coast are good candidates for imports from the Edzná-Dzibilnocac–Santa Rosa Xtampak area.[46] The style group's chemical profiles are relatively similar to each other, implying a closeness in production space and time. The stylistic variability suggests an intentional effort among the artists to differentiate their products from those of other painters and workshops.

The Chamá-Style: A Localized Style

The Chamá-style (figures 5.31–5.33) represents a highly localized production and use similar to the Turkey Vulture pottery corpus, although the Chamá pottery does not appear to have been distributed widely outside the immediate area. Unlike both the *Ik'* and Holmul-styles, Chamá-style pottery probably was not produced for more than a few generations at most. These vessels' probable uses include those discussed for the *Ik'*, Holmul and Turkey Vulture traditions; they functioned as special service ware, as social currency and as burial items.

[illegible]
[illegible] anthropomorphic animal
[illegible] Classic Period percussion
[illegible] around this Chama-style
[illegible]

5.29 [illegible]

This "Turkey Vulture" plate is unusual for its geometric rendition of the Muan bird—here with a human head, and the frontal position [illegible] on the plate's sides. It probably was created [illegible] workshop located near Dzibilnocac, Campeche, Mexico. (Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. [illegible] Robinsek.)

5.30

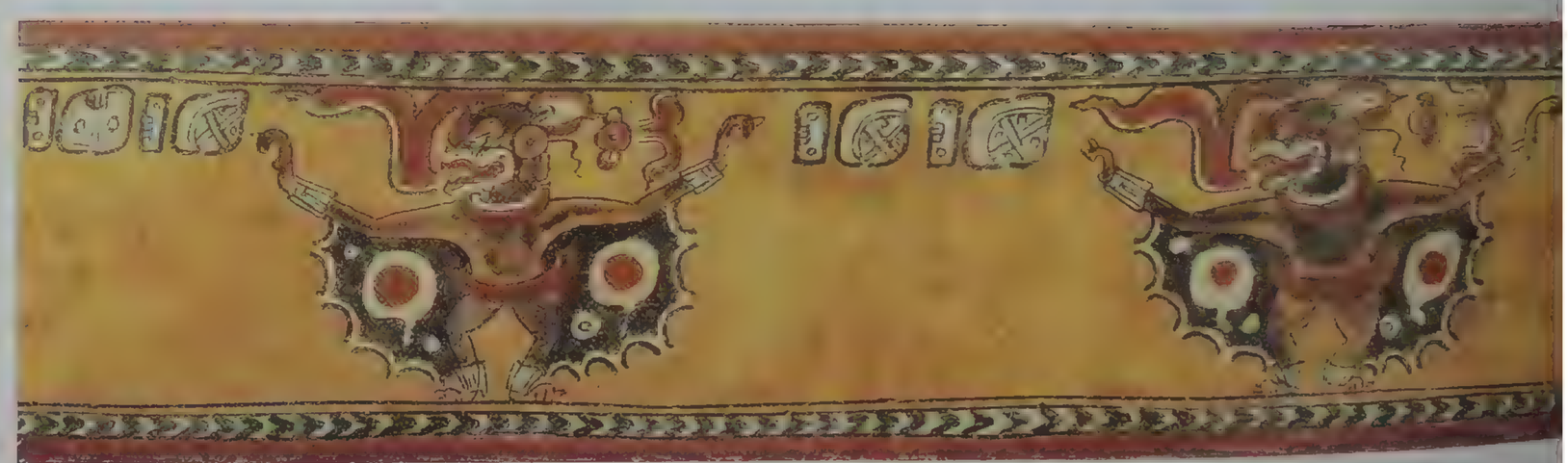
"Turkey Vulture" plate K12. A saurian creature swims in the black waters of the underworld depicted on the walls of this plate. Water lily blossoms decorate the saurian's back.

5.31 MS0250

This Chamá-style vase is painted with the image of *Camazotz'*, a main denizen of the Maya underworld. *Also see catalog 60.*

5.29

5.30

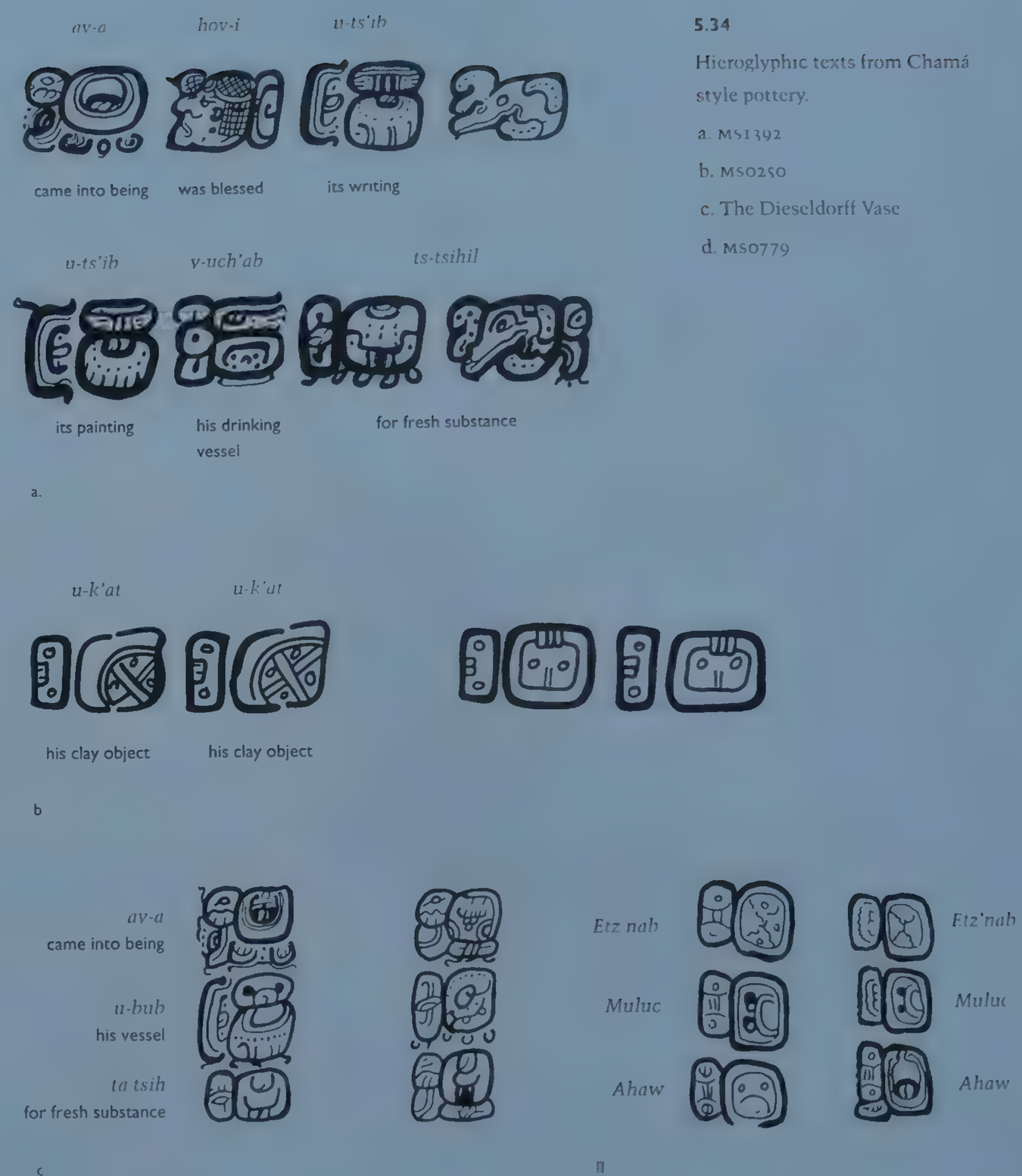


5.31

The continuous scene category includes processions of elites, warriors, a probable funeral procession wherein a lord is carried to his tomb in a hammock-litter, or a meeting of lords seated around an offertory basket.[50] Another processional scene depicts a parade of anthropomorphic animal musicians (or *ways*; supernatural co-essences) playing percussion instruments (MS0245; Figure 5.32).[51] Other continuous scene vases recount events from the *Popol Vuh* (cf. MS1392; Figure 6.50).[52] Ancillary to this continuous scene category are vessels decorated with a pattern of geometric motifs (cf. MS0804; Figure 1.15).

These Chamá vases represent only a small subset of the Late Classic ceramic production from the southern highlands of Guatemala. Their highly consistent shapes, palette, decorative motifs and pictorial programs point to their being geographically and temporally restricted. Based on the scant archaeological data available for Chamá-style vessels, they probably date from the late seventh or early eighth centuries A.D.[53] Five whole vessels painted in this style were found by E. P. Dieseldorff in mounds in the Chamá Valley, and another whole vessel was found at the site of Ratinlinxul, located downstream from Chamá.[54] Few Chamá-style vessels have been found outside the Chixoy Drainage and the Chamá Valley proper, and R. E. Smith suggests that all these vessels originated in the Chamá Valley and those found elsewhere were exports from Chamá.[55]

The trace elemental chemical data generally support Smith's conclusion that the Chamá Valley and the adjacent Chixoy Drainage area was the location of the workshops where these vessels were created. These vessels form relatively cohesive chemically defined clusters whose profiles match those of potsherds excavated by



5.34

Hieroglyphic texts from Chamá style pottery.

a. MS1392

b. MS0250

c. The Dieseldorff Vase

d. MS0779

5.33 MS0779

An anthropomorphic fox(?) sits facing a Chamá-style cylinder vase. Note the diagnostic chevron band around the upper part of the vase. (Collection of the Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquín, Guatemala.)

Chamá-style pottery was identified by E. P. Dieseldorff during his 1890s archaeological investigations in the Chamá Valley located in the southern Guatemalan highlands (Figure 5.1). The style group is comprised exclusively of cylindrically shaped vases and cups. It is readily recognized by the black-and-white chevron motif bands painted around the vases' rims and bases, the bright white and strong red-and-black palette, and the distinctive yellow to yellow-orange background colors. The artists either divided the vases' surfaces into two halves, repeating the same image on each side, or painted a continuous scene around the vessel. In the former style, usually the image is a single supernatural or human figure, and a short hieroglyphic text divides the pictorial field into two equal halves (Figure 5.31). The text usually is a shortened version of the Primary Standard Sequence. It employs the *y-uch'ab* version of the "drinking vessel" glyph and the unusual form *ta tsihil [kakaw]* ("for fresh [cacao]") (cf. MS1392; Figure 5.34a).[47] Two vases feature unique "vessel" words. MS0250 is painted with two glyphs that may read *u-k'at u-k'at* ("his clay object, his clay object") (figures 5.31 and 5.34b).[48] Another unique "vessel" word may be the glyph compound *u-bu-b(a)*, possibly relating to the Yucatecan word *bubul* ("cylinder; something long and round like a column"), an appropriate term for a straight-sided cylinder vase (Figure 5.34c).[49] Other Chamá-style vessels' texts are a simple repetition of a few daysigns or repeating pseudoglyphs (cf. MS0779; figures 5.33 and 5.34d).

Dieseldorf and James Burkitt from the Chamá Valley mounds. However, there is notable vessel-to-vessel chemical dissimilarity even between stylistically and iconographically similar vases. The marked stylistic cohesiveness of the Chamá-style vessels points to their representing a microtradition of highly localized production that occurred during a relatively short period of time. The chemical variability among the vessels suggests that a number of different workshops in the Chamá area were exploiting different clay resources and/or mixing highly localized clays and tempers from different sources, resulting in their noted paste chemical variability.[56]

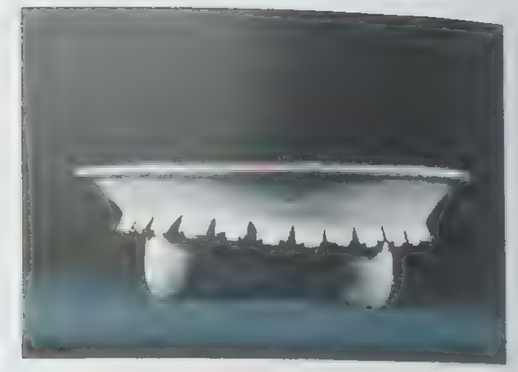
The mixed nature of the vases' imagery, which includes geometric patterns, scenes from the *Popol Vuh* and visual narratives of elite rituals, supernaturals and funerary scenes, combined with the presence of Chamá-style vessels at sites in the surrounding Alta Verapaz area, suggests both worldly and funerary use locally and a restricted regional social currency role.[57] The characteristically short PSS texts, lacking owner/patrons' and artists' names, and the preponderance of pseudoglyphs suggest that production was aimed at a broad sociopolitical and economic segment of the local society.[58]

The Tikal Dancer Plates: A Localized Style

Tikal Dancer plates recall the Chamá-style and Turkey Vulture plates because of their repetitive iconography and their production for a broader segment of Maya society, especially within the intermediary elite. Similarly to these two styles, Tikal Dancer plates were used both as special service ware and as burial offerings and also are compelling evidence for local sociopolitical integration in the Tikal environs during the early decades of the Late Classic Period.

Tikal Dancer plates are discernable by their specific and consistent iconographic program comprised of a single dancing male figure painted on the flat interior bottom of plate forms (figures 5.35–5.39). The plates have outflaring walls and exterior flanges, some of which were cut into a step-fret motif and occasionally covered with blue paint (MS1438; Figure 5.36). The motion of the dance is represented by the figure's raised leg with bent knee, outflung arms and flying loincloth ends.[59] Usually the figure is surrounded by a circular band that abuts the wall of the plate, the band painted a solid red color or with simple geometric motifs (cf. MS0244 and MS0845; figures 5.37 and 5.38). More elaborate bands are decorated with jaguar pelt designs or hieroglyphs (cf. MS0244 and MS0657; figures 5.37 and 5.39). These are often a repetition of one to three glyphs such as *y-ich* ("surface"), daysigns or pseudoglyphs (cf. MS0657 and MS1438; figures 5.39 and 5.35). No Dancer plate is painted with a complete Primary Standard Sequence phrase.

It has been suggested that these Dancer plates were produced at Tikal and nearby Uaxactún or only at Tikal.[60] The stylistic variations within the corpus point to multiple workshops, each expressing their individuality through minor yet consistent variations in the use of pictorial space, in iconography and in vessel shape. When compared chemically to the corpus of lowland Classic Period polychrome pottery, these plates cluster together based on their similar compositional profiles and chemically resemble pottery excavated from the Tikal area. However, the group's internal chemical diver-



5.35 MS1438; Tikal Dancer plate

The dancer's motion is implied by his right arm, thrust forward with palm held upwards His loincloth is flung outward, ending in long feathers, suggesting a spinning motion to his dance. (The Mint Museum, Charlotte, North Carolina. Gift of Mr. Andrew A Lanyi.) *Also see catalog 58*

5.36

Profile view of MS1438. Note its step-cut flange covered with blue pigment (photo by D. Reents-Budet)

[illegible] ds (MSC001; Figure 5.41), supernatural [illegible] MS0253 and MS0108; figures 5.40 and 5.42) and [illegible] mbolic narrative scenes of mythological events (cf. [illegible]

The style may be further defined by its formal and glyphic idiosyncratic version of the PSS, suggesting a regional variant with dialectical implications (Figure 5.44). The creators of this PSS consistently use a unique "fire" sign *k'a(h)* following the "page" or "surface" word (*y-ich*), which possibly represents the Cholan/Yucatecan root *k'a(h)* ("record"). A related glyph reading *k'ahal* is found in dedicatory texts on monuments in northern Yucatan, where Yucatec Mayan was the primary indigenous language during the Classic Period. The Altun Ha-style artists also employ a rare version of the Wing Quincunx "vase" glyph, which lacks the wing component. Without this sign (phonetic *ch'*), the glyph may spell **y-ub* ("his hollow cylinder"), which could be a Cholan equivalent of the Yucatec *hobon*.[66] A typical Altun Ha-style PSS, then, reads *ay-a hoy-i/huy-i y-ich k'a(h) u-ts'ibal-il* ("came into being, was blessed, its surface [for its] record [of] its writing, his vase"). These glyphic features reflect artistic choice and possibly one of local language variation or dialect. The accumulated linguistic cues point to Cholan as the language for these Altun Ha-style vessels, but a dialect that possibly has connections with Yucatecan languages or speakers thereof.[67]

The Altun Ha-style pottery excavated at Altun Ha forms two chemically coherent groups. MS0253 and MSC091 (figures 5.40 and 5.41) are related to the first group, and MS0108 (Figure 5.42) more closely resembles the second. All sampled vessels and sherds in the style group point to the Altun Ha area as the location of its workshops. However, Altun-Ha style vessels have been

5.39 MS0657; Tikal Dancer plate

This is one of the most fluid and detailed versions of this plate tradition. The dancer wears a fine jaguar pelt kilt and feathered backrack and headdress. Note his step-cut hairdo. *Also see catalog 59.*

5.37 MS0244; Tikal Dancer plate

The dancer lifts his left leg but keeps his toes on the ground. The circular band surrounding him is painted with jaguar pelt motifs.

5.38 MS0845

This Tikal Dancer plate is unusual for the wide band encircling the dancer and the small size of the plate's bottom, which restrict the pictorial space, requiring the artist to shorten the dancer. Abstract saurian heads are painted on the sides of the plate and originally may have been painted with a green slip that has faded. (Collection of the Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquín, Guatemala.)

sity points not only to Tikal but also to smaller subsidiary sites within the greater Tikal sphere as the locations of the workshops where these plates were created.[61]

Functionally, these plates are excellent candidates for single-use funerary items to hold food or other offerings for the dead because of their consistent iconographic program depicting the soul's dance of apotheosis out of the underworld after having defeated the lords of death.[62] Many of these plates exhibit little or no wear and some have a "kill hole" poked through their centers, ostensibly to free the plate's spirit prior to interment. Yet three points argue against this single function. First, some plates' interiors are highly eroded, implying their use by the living as service vessels.[63] Second, many Dancer plate sherds have been excavated from nonfunerary contexts at Tikal, Ramonal (or Ramonalito), Uaxactún and El Zotz'. Third, Tikal Dancer plates are painted with the same dancer imagery that characterizes the majority of Holmul-style vessels whose extrafunerary function as social currency and elite service ware is documented through archaeological and use-wear evidence.

The excavation of Tikal Dancer plates at other sites in the central Petén points to a similar ceramic exchange that, in some cases, may be characterized as social currency function.[64] Therefore, it is probable that, even though the Tikal Dancer plates' primary use may have been as a funerary ware, this does not preclude ancillary preburial use.

The Altun Ha Style: A Localized Style

The Altun Ha-style (figures 5.40–5.44), given its broad range in painting quality, shares with the Chamá-style in its production for both elite and intermediate elite consumers. Similar to the *Ik'* corpus and the more finely painted Holmul-style vessels, the Altun Ha-style artists created readable texts, all of which were a localized version of the Primary Standard Sequence. As with the finer *Ik'* and Holmul-style vessels, at least one Altun Ha-style vase was used as social currency in the political arena.

The Altun Ha-style is named for the site of Altun Ha, Belize (Figure 5.1), where hundreds of similar sherds and whole vessels were excavated from refuse dumps as well as in burials located in the ceremonial and civic heart of the site, the style dating from A.D. 650–759.[65] These vessels are distinguished by their extensive palette of slip colors (black, brown, red, orange and yellow) and the ubiquitous black and/or unusual yellow-cream background colors. The pictorial surface of cylinder vases, bowls and plates usually is divided into two halves defined by vertical bands, some of which contain short hieroglyphic texts or iconographic motifs, and the main image is repeated on each half (figures 5.40–5.42). These images include representations of water birds

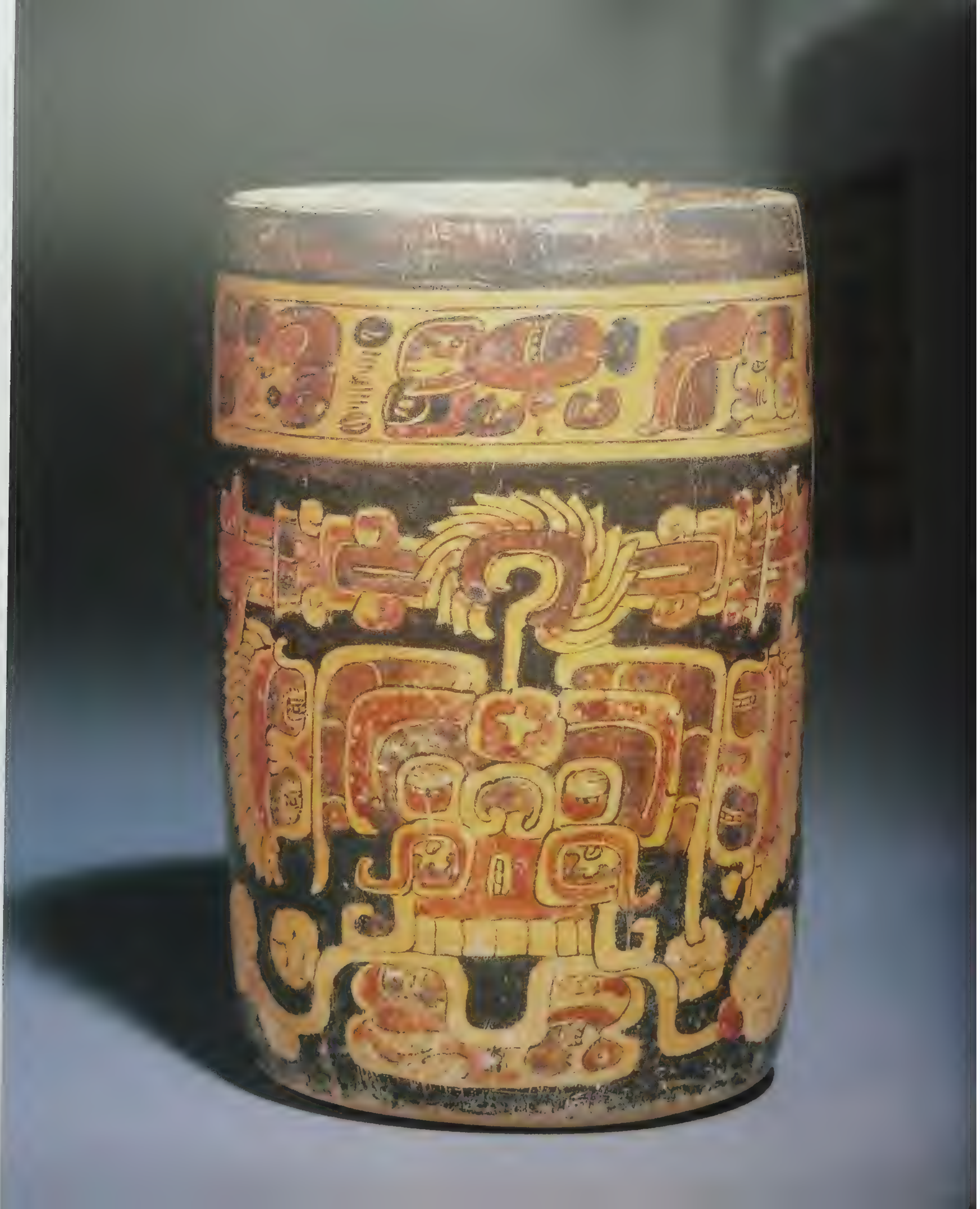
excavated from other sites in northern Belize, southern Quintana Roo and southeastern Campeche, strongly suggesting a broader production area and/or distributional process throughout this region.[68] Although we lack chemical data on most of these examples, those from Becán do not relate chemically or stylistically (or typologically) to that site's ceramics. Yet these Becán sherds are chemically separable from those excavated at Altun Ha and thus suggest production elsewhere in northern Belize.[69]

The Quetzal Vase (MSC091; Figure 5.41) was found in an elite tomb at Copán, Honduras, constructed below the floor of a regal residential compound.[70] The vase is a long-recognized export to Copán, which now can be attributed to a pottery workshop located in the Altun Ha area.[71] Its presence in an elite tomb at Copán is highly suggestive of Late Classic sociopolitical and/or economic relations between Copán and elite Maya from Altun Ha or its surrounding area.[72]

Archaeologist Rosemary Joyce discusses other artifactual evidence implying direct connections between central Belize and Honduras in her analysis of the Ulua polychrome tradition from northeastern Honduras. In its late manifestations, Ulua polychrome pottery takes on attributes characteristic of Late Classic Maya pottery from northern Belize, including black backgrounds, visual narrative in the vessels' iconographic programs, and the repetition of a glyph that recalls the idiosyncratic rendition of the God N glyph found on the Altun Ha-style pottery. Joyce concludes her analysis of this Honduran ceramic style by noting that the ". . . shared motifs, design layout, and black background of the Belize polychromes and Santana class of Ulua polychromes suggest an unusually strong and direct relationship."[73]

5.40 MS0253; Altun Ha-style

This vase is painted with a symbolic icon that combines a butterfly motif whose origins were in highland Mexico at Teotihuacan with the Maya sacred mountain *wits* from whose cleft grows a water lily plant. *Also see catalog 56.*



Some Altun Ha-style pottery certainly functioned in the sociopolitical sphere as high-level gifts within the realm of social currency. These vessels are indicative of relations among the elite from geographically distant sites. Other Altun Ha-style vessels have a marked degree of surface erosion and deep scratches on their rims (cf. MS0253; Figure 5.40), which suggest their use as service ware during social rituals that included the consumption of foods.[74]

The Naranjo Area Group: An Early Classic Style

The Naranjo Area Group-style (figures 5.45–5.48) represents late Early Classic ceramic production (ca. A.D. 500–600).[75] It shares with the Turkey Vulture tradition, the Tikal Dancer plates and the majority of the Holmul-style pottery restricted iconographic programs that pertain to the world of supernaturals and the soul's journey after death and, like these other styles, could be interpreted as strictly funerary ware. However, many of the vessels in all four of these styles have use-wear patterns, arguing against only a burial-offering function. Further, the finding of Naranjo Area Group vessels in intermediate elites' tombs at sites far from their locale of manufacture point to this pottery's use in the social politics of its time. Interestingly, the Naranjo Area Group pottery shares various iconographic and calligraphic features with the Tikal Dancer plate tradition and probably results from the well-documented interaction between these two polities throughout the Classic Period. However, the two traditions' painting styles are quite distinct, their intentional dissimilarity reflecting the intense competition between these two rivals, which occasionally erupted into outright warfare.[76]

Naranjo Area Group pottery is characterized by round-sided bowls and slightly convex-sided cylinder vases whose slip palette includes dark red, orange, black and gray on a yellow-orange or cream-white background (figures 5.45–5.48). The vessels' lips are painted with a narrow black (or occasionally red) line. On the cylinder vases, a broad dark red band is painted around the interiors and exteriors just below the rim, and non-PSS glyphs are painted in simple black line on top of the red exterior bands. PSS texts are found on bowl forms, painted directly on the yellow-orange background, their irregularly shaped glyphs also created by simple outline either in black or red.[77]

The Naranjo Area Group is distinguishable by its restricted iconographic programs that include a full figure rendering of GIII (*Xbalanque*) as the Jaguar God of the Underworld (cf. MS0200; Figure 5.46).[78] He may be a manifestation of the Old Jaguar Paddler, who is one of the Paddler Twins who takes the soul of the deceased to the underworld in a canoe.[79] Usually he is embellished with the personified wing of the Celestial Bird, whose pre-Columbian name may be *Itzam-Yeh*.[80] *Itzam-Yeh* marks the zenith of the Maya *axis mundi*, or World Tree. The *Wakah Chan*, or Milky Way, is the celestial path along which traverses the canoe of death as it falls into the underworld (below the western horizon). This path's Mayan name is *Xibal Be*, or Road to the Underworld. The Jaguar God of the Underworld occasionally is depicted on Naranjo Area Group vessels with a human standing in his canoe; presumably this passenger is going to the underworld. The dance of apotheosis out

5.41 MSC091; Altun Ha-style

This vase was excavated from an elite tomb found in the heart of Copán, Honduras. Known as the "Quetzal Vase" because of the resplendent bird who graces each side of the vessel, its final resting place at Copán and its creation in north-central Belize indicate Classic Period ties between these two areas. (From the collection of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Photograph courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Photograph by Hillel Burger.)
Also see catalog 57.

5.42 MS0108; Altun Ha-style

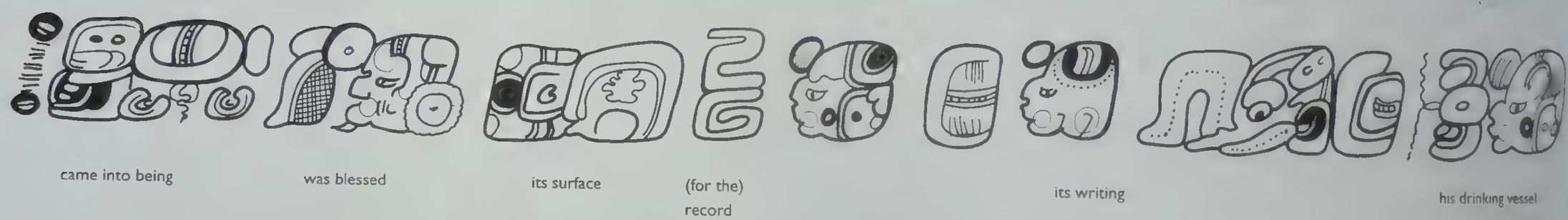
The motif on this vase is a highly abstract rendition of the skeletal head on MS0253, located between the upper butterfly image and the lower mountain motif. (The Saint Louis Art Museum, 339:1978. Gift of Morton D. May.)

5.41

5.42

5.43 K2003; Altun Ha-style

Unlike most of the Altun Ha-style vases, two different images are painted on this vase. Two feathered snails are painted on a black background on one side of the vase while insects and birds cavort on the other side.



5.44 (*above*)

Hieroglyphic text painted on MS0253. The creators of the Altun Ha-style PSS use a unique sign *k'a(h)* following the "page" or "surface" word (*y-ich*), which may have its linguistic roots in a Yucatecan language. These scribal painters also employ a rare version of the "vase" word that lacks the "wing" (*ch'*) component (drawing by D. Reents-Budet).

5.45 MS0199; Naranjo Area Group-style

This vase is typical of the style in its slightly curving walls, dark red paint and supernatural imagery that occupies all available pictorial space. The hieroglyphs are poorly executed and the text repeats the same few signs, which remain undeciphered. These may be pseudoglyphs.

5.46 MS0200; Naranjo Area Group-style

The main figure is the same as that found on the Tikal Dancer plates and the Holmul-Dancer from the Holmul-style pottery. The Naranjo Area Group-style is distinguishable from these in the greater use of polychromy and the presence of GIII (*Xbalanque*) in his guise as the Jaguar God of the Underworld (or the Old Jaguar Paddler). On this vase he is represented by only his head rather than the full figure version found on other vases (cf figures 5.45 and 5.47). A long row of feathers adorns the back of his head, and the red sacrificial scarf is tied beneath his chin. His characteristic personified wing is found in front of his face with long adornments hanging from it.

nominal phrases on these bowls, where it functions to further designate the named person as a person from Naranjo (that is, of the Naranjo lineage). Its use qualifying *kakaw* brings to mind the "Uaxactún designer" found on the Uaxactún pottery discussed above. Following the Uaxactún example, the *ho-kab* glyph could be functioning as a toponym qualifying the Naranjo Area Group bowls and their *kakaw* contents as "Naranjo frothy cacao."

The typical Naranjo Area Group PSS text, then, reads *u-ta huy-i y-ich u-xubal y-uch'ab ta y-utal om kakaw chak ch'ok kelem [Ruler 1] ho-kab [titles]* ("came into being, was blessed, its surface, its writing, his drinking vessel for his Naranjo frothy cacao food, great lineage member youth [related to] Ruler 1 of Naranjo [other Naranjo titles]"). The presence of the modifier *om* on *kakaw* is unique, reflecting the greater diversity of *kakaw* modifiers during Early Classic times rather than its having linguistic or regional significance. The language of the Naranjo Area Group PSS is Cholan, although the Yucatecan preposition *ti* is used in these texts.

The chemical profiles of the sampled Naranjo Area Group sherds and vessels are very similar to each other. Their chemical compositions recall sherds from Tikal but are slightly more similar to samples from Naranjo and its environs. In all cases, however, these similarities represent relatively low probabilities of group membership, leading to two possible interpretations. First, it may be that Naranjo Area Group workshops were located somewhere between Tikal and Naranjo, a region in which are located many sites for which we have scant archaeological data and no sampled pottery, these sites having suffered extensive looting. A second possibility interprets the chemical differences between the Early Classic Naranjo Area Group pottery and the sampled Late Classic Naranjo area sherds as reflecting compositional differences resulting from different paste recipes and the use of different raw materials by Naranjo's Early Classic potters versus their Late Classic counterparts. The available data support this latter interpretation, and thus the Naranjo Area Group workshops probably were located in the vicinity of Naranjo.

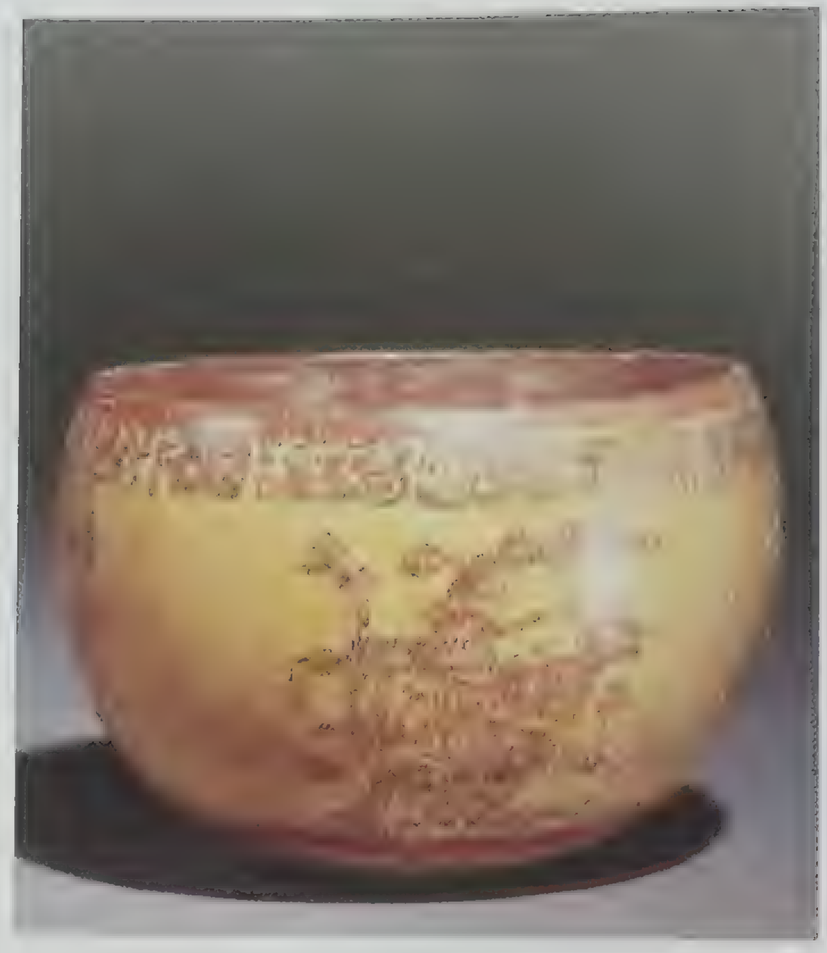
Given the Naranjo Area Group vessels' focus on death and apotheosis iconography, it is tempting to suggest that they were created specifically as burial items. Yet other Naranjo Area Group vessels depict such nonfunerary activities as vision quest rituals and undefined mythological scenes whose themes are not readily connected to those found in the *Popol Vuh*. Further, Naranjo Area Group vessels have been excavated from elite domestic refuse deposits at Tikal and Copán (Figure 5.48), both sites located outside the style group's probable area of manufacture.[86] Similar to the Altun Ha-style pottery, then, Naranjo Area Group vessels may have functioned as part of elite exchange or gift-giving events in the overarching realm of social currency prior to ending their pre-Columbian lives in tombs.

5.48 MSC133

This Naranjo Area Group-style potsherd was excavated at Copán. The standing figure is *Hun Nal Yeh* (or *Hun Hunahpu*) from the *Popol Vuh*, depicted emerging from an earth-symbolizing split turtle carapace and carrying a double-chambered bag filled with maize.

Ceramic Styles and Sociopolitical Identity

Each of these seven style groups represents a specific constellation of formal elements that allows each to be identified as a group of related objects created roughly at the same time and in the same area. The styles share iconographic programs that recount historical events and mytho-religious ideas because these are part of the visual grammar that expresses the fundamental beliefs supporting Classic Maya civilization. Individualistic interpretations of these programs were developed in



5.47 MS0285; Naranjo Area Group-style. GIII as the Jaguar God of the Underworld or the Old Jaguar Paddler embellishes this bowl. Its PSS text records its owner/patron as Ruler I of Naranjo.

of the underworld is found on other Naranjo Area Group vases (cf. MS0199 and MSC133; figures 5.45 and 5.48).

These segments of the postdeath journey and triumphal apotheosis are combined on one unusual vase whose style remains undefined but whose chemical profile is similar to pottery from the eastern Petén, including Naranjo Area Group vessels (MS1120; Figure 5.49).[81] On this vase, the dancer clearly is *Hun Nal Yeh* (or *Hun Hunahpu*) from the *Popol Vuh*; he is emerging from an earth-symbolizing split turtle carapace and carrying a double-chambered bag filled with maize (cf. MSC133; Figure 5.48). Behind him are three canoes in which stand supernaturals, including the Jaguar God of the Underworld wielding a paddle and possibly *Hun Ahpu*, his twin brother.[82] As with other ceramic painting styles, the Naranjo Area Group artists freely interpreted this same seminal death journey and apotheosis theme, their unique version helping to distinguish their œuvre from all other Late Classic polychrome pottery.[83]

The Naranjo Area Group's hieroglyphic texts also are distinctive, both calligraphically and epigraphically. The group includes both PSS and non-PSS texts that share the same irregularly shaped glyphs created by simple line in black or red paint. The non-PSS phrases (Figure 5.50a-c) repeat one or two mainsigns with various prefixes, including an unusual *ahaw* glyph with an unidentifiable prefix (on MS0808), or pairs of undecipherable pseudo-glyph signs (Figure 5.50c). It is possible that these short phrases, which currently elude decipherment, may relate to Classic Period ritual expressions, which is similar to Michael Coe's hypothesis that the pottery texts were incantations dealing with death and the soul's underworld journey.[84]

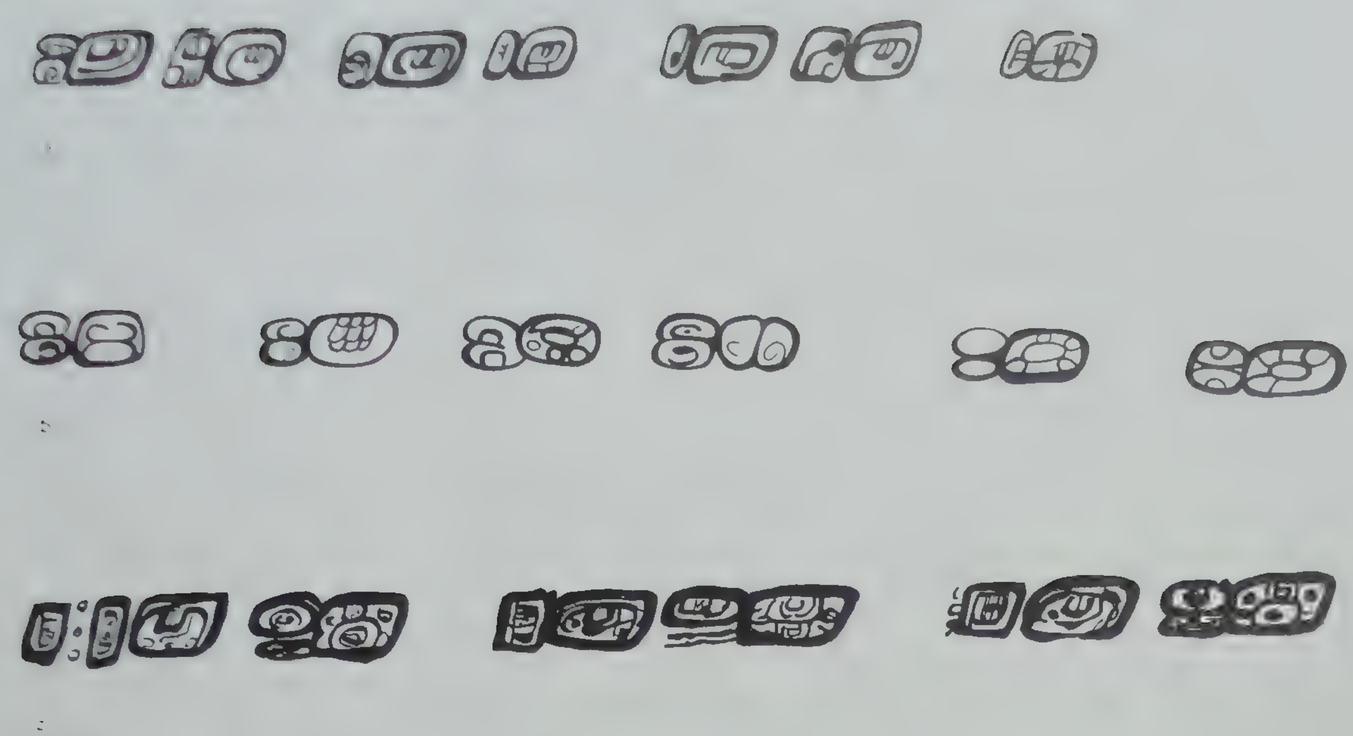
Only the round-sided bowls are painted with a Primary Standard Sequence, the majority of which name Ruler I of Naranjo as the vase's patron/owner (Figure 5.51a, b).[85] Rather than every one of these bowls having been made for, and/or owned by, Ruler I, some of them may invoke his name to identify the vessel's owner as a member of his lineage. Glyphic evidence supporting this hypothesis includes the consistent use of *chak ch'ok* and *kelem* ("great lineage member" and "youth") in the nominal closure phrase that ends with two of the same regal titles as are found in the stone inscriptions at Naranjo (the *sac-Chuen* "pure artisan" title and Naranjo emblem glyph).

These PSS phrases are readily recognizable as a distinct textual style by their use of the unusual "writing" or "finishing" word *u-xubal* instead of the more usual *u-ts'ib* ("his painting/writing"). They also share a unique form of the *chak ch'ok* glyph and an unusually elaborate contents notation *ho-kab om kakaw* ("ho-kab frothy cacao"). The *ho-kab* glyph also is found in the

different regions as part of the social process of community identity, including that of the artists, their patrons and the consumer audience. In the same way, the idiosyncracies in the formal aspects of painting, technological features, hieroglyphic writing and programmatic interpretations, all of which are the salient components of style, allow the pottery to serve as a visual marker of social identity whether in a closed "domestic" context, as elite ritual service ware or on the Classic political stage. The presence in these vessels' hieroglyphic texts of the names of patrons and outstanding artists provided an additional sociopolitical facet to their imagery. These readily distinguishable visual features contributed to the efficacy of the pottery's manipulation as social currency, signaling and securing relationships as well as masking social, political and economic inequalities within cohesive and between competing communities and polities.[87] These paintings on ceramic gained social power not solely from their painted imagery but most importantly from their individualistic expressions of these ideas. Here style, be it individual or communal, becomes a powerful social and political tool in the hands of those who wield these culturally symbolic art objects. These stylistically imbued vessels' social function is not at odds with, nor exclusive of, their also being used as burial offerings because, in this context, they continue to act on the broader social stage.

5.49 [illegible]

The imagery on this red background vase combines different portions of the postdeath journey and triumphal dance of apotheosis out of the underworld. The deceased person's triumph over death is symbolized by his becoming the deity *Hun Nal Yeh* (*Hun Hunahpu* of the *Popol Vuh*) as he emerges from the underworld. The supernatural Paddlers who took his soul into the underworld stand behind him in their chthonic canoes. (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Landon T. Clay. Still photograph courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.)



5.50

Non-PSS texts from Naranjo Area Group-style vases (drawings by D. Reents-Budet).

a. MS0199

b. MS0200

c. MS0808

Production Processes, Materials and Workshop Structure

The workshops where these elite ceramics were created and the technology of their production certainly constituted a highly codified and rich artistic subculture within Maya society. Most investigations of Classic Maya specialized production focus on the manufacture of more broadly used consumer items such as chert and obsidian tools and ceramic figurines. The pictorial polychrome pottery workshops have not been investigated, however, in part because none has been found archaeologically.[88] In spite of the lack of archaeological data, the vessels themselves provide information from which educated speculations can be proposed concerning the staffing of the workshops, the relationships among their artists and the technologies of painted pottery production.

Classic Maya painted pottery is made from mixtures of local clays and a tempering material such as calcite, quartz or volcanic ash.[89] Temper gives strength to the damp earthenware paste by decreasing its inherent plasticity, aids in shrinkage control during the drying process and assists in the transfer of heat during the firing-cooling process.[90] The vessels are hand-built, made by adding coils of clay to a pancake-shaped bottom created by pressing clay into a shallow or flat wooden mold or into the palm of the hand.[91] The sides of the vessels are pulled up and made thin by a combined process of pinching and scraping the clay coils.[92] Maya potters today carry on this hand-building tradition, and one only has to look in markets in Mexico and Guatemala to find evenly shaped and thin-walled vessels made without a pottery wheel.

Bowls and vases probably were placed on a wooden platform whose underside was slightly rounded or conical in shape; modern Yucatec Maya potters call this platform a *k'abal*.[93] This allows the potter to rotate the vessel during the shaping and thinning process without destroying its shape. It is probable that a *k'abal* also was used during the painting of the vessel. That the thinning of the pots' walls was an integral part of their creation is implied by the *hay y-uch'ab* phrase in the PSS, labeling the vase as a "thin-walled drinking vessel."

After allowing the vessel to dry to a "leather hardness," its exterior surface was smoothed and/or burnished in order to create an even surface on which to apply the subsequent base slip and painted imagery.[94] Appropriate burnishing tools include wooden implements and very smooth stones. After burnishing, a base slip was applied either by dipping the pot into a vat of prepared slip or, more likely, by using a piece of cloth or softened leather as the applicator. This allows the potter to control the thickness of slip application, recalling modern techniques among Native American potters

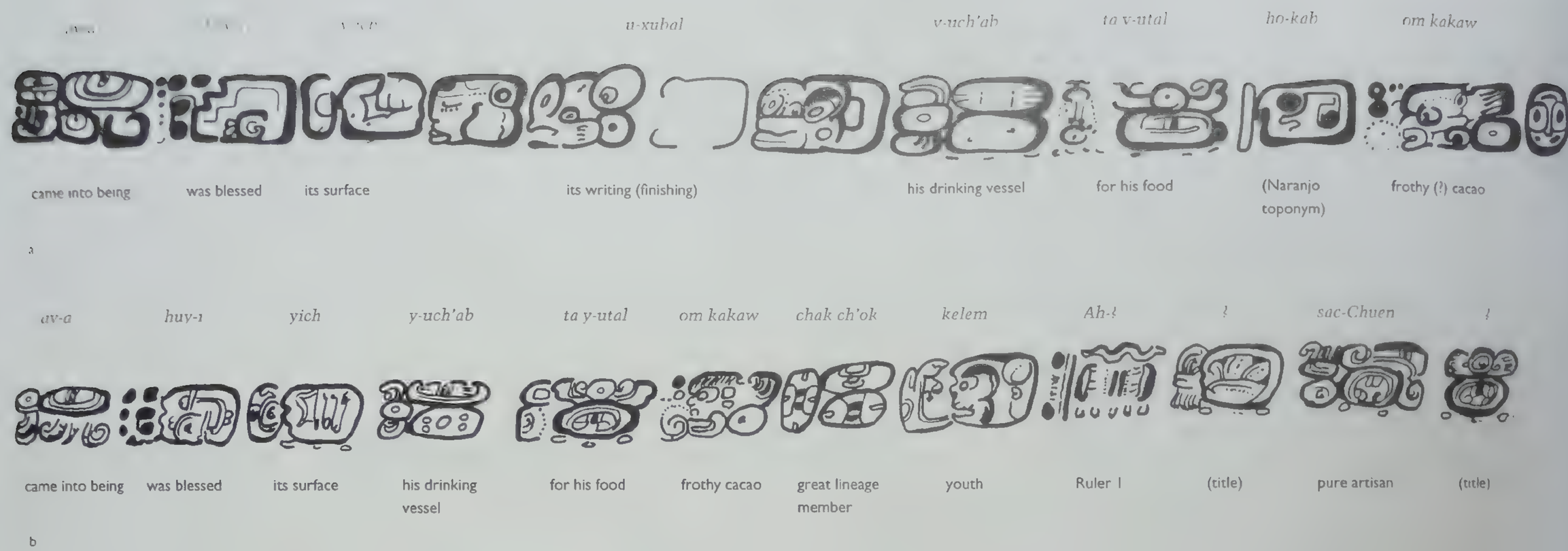
[illegible] Southwest. After drying, the base slip [illegible] was smoothed using a soft cloth or piece [illegible] creating a glossy surface on which to paint [illegible]

[illegible] slip is usually a neutral white or cream [illegible] some painting styles are characterized by colored [illegible] backgrounds achieved by adding pigments to the base slip. The majority of these vessels first were slipped with the white base coat, which creates a highly reflective undersurface adding transparency and color lucidity [illegible] subsequent painted imagery. Dark backgrounds such as red or black were achieved by filling in the background areas with colored slips after having painted the pictorial imagery. Some of the bright white slips are soft and powdery and tend to erode much faster than the colored slips. These white base slips probably contain a high proportion of kaolin or white marls (a mixture of refined clay and calcite), both of which are highly refractory (resistant to the effects of heat) and thus do not bond well during firing. This causes the fired slips to be susceptible to erosion and may account for the varying degrees of erosion noted on particular styles of pottery, especially those upon which large amounts of the surface area were not covered by imagery painted with colored slips.[95]

There are no true glazes in pre-Columbian Maya pottery, yet the Classic Period painted pottery is remarkably glossy and resistant to weathering. Given the low firing temperature of these pots, the paint is most likely a type of *terra sigillata*, that is, a slip-based paint.[96] Terra sigillata is made by separating the tiniest particles (below one micron) from a clay through levigation of finely ground clay mixed with large amounts of water in a settling basin. Today alkalis such as sodium silicates or soda ash are added to this slurry, which assists in the dispersion of the individual clay particles, actually causing them to repel each other (called *deflocculation*). The finest clay fraction is then siphoned off from the top. The resulting terra sigillata can be concentrated by evaporation, which allows the pottery painter a high degree of flexibility in creating a wide range of densely opaque to very translucent slip paints.[97]

During burnishing and firing, the tiny clay particles in the terra sigillata become evenly dispersed on the surface of the pot due to the natural presence of potassium-bearing minerals. The particles form an overlapping fish-scale structure that creates a glossy hard surface resistant to chemical attack. This is characteristic of Classic Maya painted pottery.[98] The Maya base slips may have been made from the lower levigation levels, because these are slightly more gross than the upper levels, providing what is called *tooth*, which greatly enhances the adherence property of the base slip for the subsequent paint layers. To obtain a high gloss for this base slip as well as for the painted imagery, the base slip needs only a light polishing with a soft cloth. More gloss may be obtained by applying thin layers of terra sigillata to a pre-fired (bisque) and possibly pre-slipped vessel and lightly polishing the slip in either a semidry or dry stage. This not only makes the painted imagery more glossy but also gives the colored slips brighter values. No direct evidence exists for double-fired Classic Period pottery, but secondary evidence may include the exceptionally glossy surfaces that have survived twelve hundred years of burial and haphazard, unprotected disposal in trash middens.

As a paint, terra sigillata characteristically creates vivid colors with the addition of only small amounts of coloring oxides (3 percent or less, combined with approximately 30 percent clay particles and 70 percent water). It also gives high definition to painted lines because it does not fuse and run during firing. Common



5.51

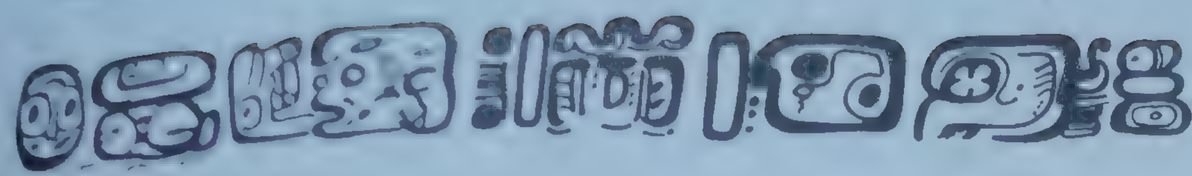
Primary Standard Sequence texts from Naranjo Area Group-style bowls.

a. MS0285 (drawing by D. Reents-Budet).

b. K4562 (drawing by Barbara MacLeod).

pigments include the various iron oxides (especially red iron oxide Fe^2O_3, also called *ferric oxide* or *hematite*, and black iron oxide Fe^2O_4, also called *ferrous oxide*), whose hue variations provide a wide color range from yellow-ocher to red to brown and black. The range can be increased by mixing these iron oxides with other metallic oxides (e.g., manganese, cobalt) as well as by processing the iron oxide itself through a pre-firing treatment called *calcining*, which changes (darkens) the hue of the original oxide.

Reds and oranges are the predominant colors of Classic Maya pottery paints and are the most glossy. Today, these colors—created by adding red iron oxide to terra sigillata or by using natural red earthenware clays—are the most glossy of all slip paints (which is true also for the Classic Maya pottery). Value ranges (red to oranges to yellow) are achieved by proportional differences of oxide to base paint, by thickness of application and also by mixtures of different oxides. For example, yellow can be achieved either by a highly diluted solution of red iron oxide or by the use of yellow ocher fired at low temperatures. Black is achieved by using black iron oxide (ferrous iron oxide), by calcining red or black iron oxide, or through the use of manganese or manganese-iron mixtures.[99] The pink, rose and maroon hues characteristic of some styles of Maya pottery can be created by adding highly diluted solutions (pink and rose) to heavy concentrations of red iron oxide (maroon). Maroon also can be achieved by combining red iron oxide with manganese. The purple-browns occasionally seen on Maya painted vessels may have been created by the combination of manganese dioxide and ferric oxide. It should be mentioned that the deflocculants used to create the base terra sigillata also cause the slip to be much more smooth-flowing in less amounts of water. Thus the Maya pottery painters could create darker values (e.g.,



Ruler I (Naranjo toponym) [title]

5.52 K5505

Note the gray color, which may originally have been green, having faded through time.

5.53 MS0161

A feathered saurian undulates across the surface of the vase. These now-gray feathers may originally have been green, the slip having faded to a dull gray hue.

a rich dark red) simply by using a dense slip paint colored with red iron oxide.

An intriguing gray color seen on various Maya vessels (figures 5.52 and 5.53) may originally have been green because these gray areas color jade jewelry and quetzal bird feathers that naturally are bright green. There are scant oxides that produce a green color in low-fire unglazed ceramics, and greens created with organic-based pigments are fugitive when subjected to heat.[100] The chemical composition of this now-gray slip remains unknown, although green is produced today in terra sigillatas by the addition of chrome oxide.[101]

Finely ground mineral pigments have been found archaeologically at many sites. Two recent and notable examples are the group of small, plain vessels filled with red iron oxide from the royal scribe's tomb at Copán and the five miniature modeled jars filled with pigment found by Payson Sheets at El Cerén, El Salvador.[102] These small receptacles recall the tiny misnamed "poison bottles," some of which probably were containers for powdered pigments rather than poison (Figure 5.54).[103] Merle Greene Robertson has analyzed the pigments used to paint the walls of the elite buildings at Palenque. These mineral pigments probably are the same as those used by the contemporary pottery painters.

Classic Maya polychrome pottery was fired at temperatures ranging between 500–700°C (approximately 900–1260°F, or approximately cones 022–016), a low range easily reached in open bonfires and pit fires. There is scant evidence for the use of kilns in pottery produc-

5.54

This tiny bottle may have contained powdered pigments or other special materials such as copal incense. The carved imagery depicts God K and God L conversing. The hieroglyphic text most likely provides further details, although it remains undeciphered.

5.55 MS1127

The eroded area in the PSS on this Holmul-style vase shows evidence of two coats of the white underslip and the subsequent repainting of this area. The production sequence noted here may indicate that the polychrome pottery was fired twice (also see 5.23). *Also see catalog 51.*

5.56

An artist's hand emerges from a skeletal saurian's maw and holds a paintbrush whose construction recalls Chinese calligraphy brushes. From a carved bone found in the tomb of the Tikal ruler *Hasaw Ka'an K'awil* (Burial 116, Temple I; drawing by Barbara MacLeod).

tion in Mesoamerica.[104] And the high temperatures usually achieved in kiln firings would significantly lower the glossiness of terra sigillata slip paints. Maya potters today bake their wares in open bonfires as well as in pits dug into the ground, and it is generally believed that these were the two primary pre-Columbian firing techniques.[105] Although these open firings would leave little evidence in the archaeological record, fire pits have been found, including a group of twelve on the outskirts of the pre-Columbian site of Emal, Yucatan.[106]

Because of the paucity of archaeologically identified Maya pottery workshops, we can only speculate about the polychrome pottery's firing techniques. Important considerations for future studies include the nature of the firing area itself (open or pit firing or the use of kiln-like structures), the kinds of fuels used, the temperatures reached during the firing stages, the duration of firing time, whether *saggers* or other protective ceramic objects were used during the firing process (to protect the vessels' surfaces from fire clouds) and even whether some of the pots were pre-fired and the imagery painted onto the bisqued ware. This latter point deserves greater consideration even though it is widely believed that Classic Maya pottery was fired only once.

MS1127 may provide evidence for two firings (Figure 5.23). This vase was expertly painted by an accomplished artist. In one small area in the hieroglyphic text, a second coat of the base slip was applied. The area is visible today because only here has the painted imagery eroded from the surface, strongly implying a slip adherence problem not suffered elsewhere on the vessel (Figure 5.55). This resurfacing may be explained by the slipped vessel having been bisque fired, after which calcite inclusions from the clay body became visible when tiny parts of the base slip spalled off during the vessel's expansion and contraction during firing and cooling. This small area would be unacceptable for painting because of its unsmooth surface. Thus the area was reslipped, and only then was the vessel painted and fired. The reslipped area would not adhere as well as the bisque-fired base slip and would result in the disintegration of the surface noted here.[107] Although one vessel does not make a strong case for two firings of the Classic Period pottery, the possibility certainly exists.

Maya pottery painters used various kinds of paintbrushes to apply the slip paints. Based on observations of the very fine detail lines commonly found in the pots' painted imagery, on the long, thin brush strokes used to delineate glyphs bands around a vessel's circumference and on the pre-Columbian depictions of artists at work, one pre-Columbian brush recalls Chinese calligraphy

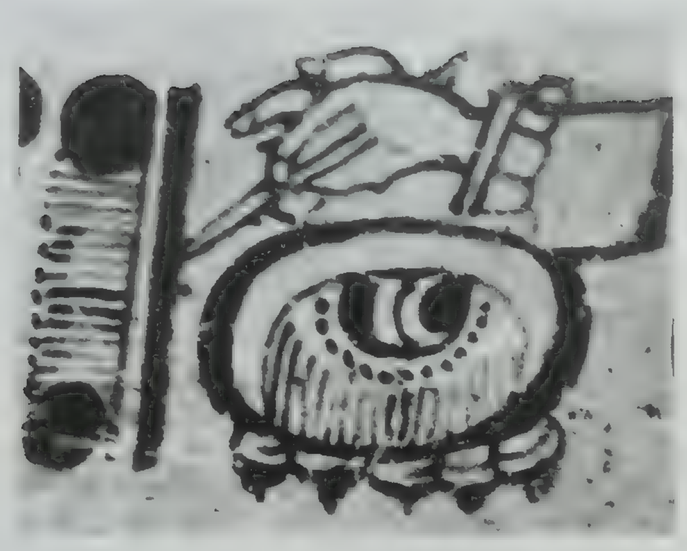
brushes whose bristles are made from very fine animal or human hair (figures 5.56 and 5.57). Depictions of these brushes suggest they were made from a hollow tube similar to the bamboo shafts of Chinese brushes. Calligraphy brushes hold a large amount of paint and their highly flexible hairs allow the artist to create flowing, curvilinear lines. This type of flowing line is predominant in Maya pottery painting.

There is a limit to calligraphy brushes' paint-carrying capacity, especially if broad bands of color are to be applied to a pot's surface without constant replenishing of paint on the brush and if the slip paint is particularly heavy. Many pots' wide rim bands, for example, indicate that a single brush stroke applied the slip paint in one long motion. A more durable brush yet with fine bristles would be needed to hold the greater amounts of slip required to paint a single episode rim band. This type of durable brush with a large paint-carrying capacity is made from the yucca plant by modern Native American pottery painters in the American Southwest. Contrary to common belief, yucca fiber brushes can be very flexible, depending on the amount of processing of the plant fibers. Yucca brushes can create remarkably curvilinear and elegant lines while carrying large amounts of heavy paint, depositing it evenly on the surface of the vessel.[108]

Plant fiber brushes may be depicted in the pottery imagery (figures 5.58 a, b). These are distinguishable from the calligraphy brushes in their lack of differentiation between the brush's shaft and its prepared tip. Although they resemble pre-Columbian carving tools (cf. Figure 5.59), most carving tools have a blade hafted into their ends. The plant fiber brushes' stiffness is indicated by pigment striations found in the broad color bands painted on many vessels (cf. MS1158; Figure 5.60).

5.57

A seated artist/scribe holds a halved-shell paint container and paintbrush. Similar to Chinese calligraphy brushes, its handle may be a hollow wooden tube and the bristles made from fine animal or human hair. This sculpture comes from Copán, where it embellished a structure that has been identified as a scribal residence or meeting house (see 2.11a)



a

b.

5.58

a. Plant fiber brush in the hand of a painter used pictographically in the hieroglyph for "artist" (*ah-ts'ib*) (from K772).

b. Depiction of plant fiber brush (from K1523).

Specialization within the Workshops

Archaeological and inferential evidence imply that Late Classic specialized artists were attached to the royal courts at many Maya sites.[109] This pattern apparently continued into the sixteenth century because Spanish chroniclers writing about the Maya and the Aztecs of highland Mexico mention that artists were connected to the elite, creating objects integral to the life and rituals of the ruling classes. These Spanish observations mirror the Classic Period epigraphic record that identifies artists as being connected to—and members of—the elite, including sons not in direct line for the throne.

Although little is known about the internal histories of these elite workshops, evidence from Palenque may indicate artistic continuity within a family and possibly from one generation to the next. The Temple of the Inscriptions is the funerary monument not only to the site's most famous ruler, Lord Pacal, but also to Palenque's architects and sculptors. The carved stone Sarcophagus Lid, which covered Pacal's earthly remains, is one of the greatest of Classic Maya sculptures, and the names of its creators are carved into its edge. One of these artists' nominal titles is shared by another person who carved sculptures found in the Group of the Cross, the architectural monument of Pacal's son and successor, Lord Can-Balam. Given the time span between these two rulers and their respective architectural masterpieces, logic dictates that this second artist is a younger brother of the sculptor who worked for Lord Pacal (or he may be from the next generation). If the latter be the case, we may have evidence suggesting the passing from one generation to the next of a sculptural workshop's royal tradition, mirroring the relationship between their respective royal patrons.[110]

Evidence also exists for artists working in more than one medium. Nikolai Grube has noted the signature of the same artist on a carved Chocholá-style pottery vessel and on a carved stone lintel from the Initial Series building at Xkalumkin.[111] Given the similarity in technological and intellectual skills needed to paint the pre-Columbian books and the pictorial pottery, it is not inconceivable that the creators of the codices also painted elite pottery. In particular, note the pictorial composition, palette and imagery on the unusual square vase MS1524, each of whose "pages" closely resembles the Dresden Codex (Figure 5.61). Classic Maya painters also worked in fresco, embellishing the interiors of tombs and the exteriors of buildings. They painted the

[illegible] and they [illegible] images [illegible] carved stone [illegible] knowledgeable and skilled [illegible] dinated in many projects, be [illegible] pottery [illegible] production patterns and given the [illegible] needed to create a pictorial ceramic mas- [illegible] possible that specialization existed within [illegible] workshops but that potters and painters [illegible] side and that master painter-apprentice [illegible] existed as well. Given the high degree of [illegible] skills and production time needed to paint [illegible] pictorial vessels, it seems likely that the blank [illegible] made by the master painter but instead was [illegible] specialized potters and/or apprentices to [illegible] master painter, both resident in the same workshop. [illegible] residency is suggested by two factors. First, [illegible] and slip paints should be made from the same [illegible] ensure consistent quality and proper adherence [illegible] slip paints to the vessel. Second, if the pottery is [illegible] single-fired ware, unfired greenware is extremely fragile and subject to easy breakage. Too much handling degrades the smooth surface and also makes the pot unsuitable for slipping and painting because the absorption of oil from human hands lessens the adherence property of the water-based slip paints. Therefore, it is risky to move unfired vessels from one workshop to another and back again to be fired; for similar reasons, bisque ware is not readily transportable without suffering damage.[114] Based on ceramic workshop labor patterns worldwide, Classic Maya elite pottery painters may have begun as apprentices, through the years moving from vessel production to painting. By first learning to formulate acceptable clay bodies and slip paints, form the vessels, prepare their surfaces for painting and fire the pottery, apprentices would acquire the skills needed to create the specialized pictorial polychrome pottery.[115]

The presence of potters and painters working together is suggested by the Codex-style pottery, which was produced in great numbers.[116] Production on a large scale usually includes division of labor because of its proven efficiency. Also, many of these Codex-style pots were rather poorly formed yet were painted by highly skilled artists. This variation in quality between a vessel and its painting may indicate that the potters were not the painters. Another example of division of labor may be seen with MS1127, discussed above (cf. figures 5.23 and 5.55). This beautifully painted vase had a second coat of base slip applied to a small area on its upper surface to cover calcite inclusions in the vase's body that had pushed through the base slip.[117] This second coat was applied after the painting of the light-red outlines that delineated the vase's pictorial areas. This resurfacing suggests the following sequence of events: (1) the potter formed the vase and slipped its surface, (2) an apprentice painter defined the vase's pictorial area with outlines, (3) the master painter noticed the uneven surface area and required the second application of slip to this area, (4) an apprentice reslipped the area and repainted the red outlines, and (5) the master painted the vase. Similar division of labor among specialists working on the same project has been noted architecturally at Tzibanche. The doorjamb in Temple VI was cut back a few centimeters to accommodate a previously carved

5.59

A Maya sculptor carves a stone monument probably an altar. His carving tool is constructed from different materials and is a different form than a paintbrush (from the Emiliano Zapata Tablet, a carved stone wall panel from the Palenque region of Chiapas, Mexico, drawing by Barbara MacLeod).

5.60 MS1155 [illegible]

The artist who painted this vase probably used a relatively stiff plant fiber brush to paint the broad color bands in which are visible the striations of pigment laid down by the stiff, individual fibers. (Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina; Gift of Mr. Andrew A. Lanyi.)

5.61 MS1524

This unusual square vase closely resembles the pre-Columbian codices in pictorial composition, palette and imagery. Here each side of the vase is like a page from a book.

wooden lintel so that all of the carved area was visible when put in place. This mis fit suggests lack of communication among the architects, stone masons and lintel carvers.[118]

Similar master-apprentice relationships have been noted for other elite artworks, including the painted red lines delimiting the pictorial planes in the Dresden Codex and the wall paintings in the tombs at Río Azul and the outlines defining the individual glyph blocks on the unfinished hieroglyphic stair at Dos Pilas.[119] These initial steps oftentimes are delegated to apprentices in fine art workshops throughout the world. The handiwork of master artist and apprentice sculptors is found on the Palace Tablet and the Sarcophagus Lid at Palenque. Both were painted by one master, but their carving displays variations in technique and skill. The more accomplished sculptors worked on the more important imagery whereas less-skilled craftsmen, probably apprentices, carved the less-important areas.[120] Stela 12 from Piedras Negras is signed by at least seven sculptors, and it is unlikely that all occupied the topmost level of master artist; some must have been apprentice sculptors.[121] Outside the Maya area, master painters and their apprentices working together on major projects have been identified in the murals from Techinantitla, Teotihuacan.[122]

By its definition, a masterpiece is a well-coordinated œuvre, including use of space, line quality and manipulations of paint. These requirements demand that the same master artist paint both the hieroglyphs and pictorial images.[123] The creation of the painted imagery on the Classic Period pottery follows this artistic dictate, there being scant evidence of two painters working together on any one vessel's primary imagery.

Classic Maya elite painted pottery represents one of the world's outstanding painting traditions. As with all great artistic traditions, the mastering of the techniques, personal artistic skills, iconography and literary abilities required years, if not a lifetime, of practice and experimentation necessarily taking place within a highly structured educational environment. In the Maya polychrome pottery workshops, apprentices learned their art under the watchful eyes and hands of the masters. These junior members probably learned to mix clay and temper to create acceptable clay bodies and to make the slip paints. They would learn to form the vessels and prepare their surfaces for painting, and they may even have assisted with the firing of the pots. It also is possible that potters and painters were not the same person in all workshops. More than likely, a workshop's degree of specialization was correlated directly with the quality of the pottery being produced. That is to say, the more elaborate the vessels' imagery, the more renowned the painters. In addition, their workshops would be characterized by higher degrees of specialization.[124] Master painters probably were in great demand among the ruling elite and by necessity and artistic proclivity the painters may not have restricted themselves to working exclusively in the clay medium, their artistic and intellectual skills being applicable to other projects such as painting codices and murals.

Notes

[illegible] Rice [illegible] of these [illegible] the [illegible] his seminal [illegible] basis of the [illegible] analytical technique [illegible] design style was [illegible] in part [illegible] insufficient whole ves- [illegible] attributions with [illegible] design styles. In the cur- [illegible] these potential problems have [illegible] account and will be dis- [illegible] in future publications.

[illegible] Sackett (1990).

[illegible] (Lemonnier 1986).

[illegible] the archaeological cera- [illegible] technique of type:variety [illegible] highly useful in discover- [illegible] range of social linkages when [illegible] are correctly carried out. [illegible] as used in the present [illegible] should be realized in tan- [illegible] anthropological study (see Appen- [illegible]

[illegible] In recent years, archaeologists and [illegible] have moved away from [illegible] study of elite material culture because [illegible] the prevailing viewpoint that the upper echelons of a society have little to do with the major forces forming and changing that society. Therefore, the pictorial polychrome pottery has been eschewed as an important data source for archaeological investigations. Archaeological ceramicists [illegible] pottery within the framework [illegible] type:variety analytical system into [illegible] to Maya archaeology. However, the type:variety system generally has been utilized to identify sociopolitical connections on a broader analytical level beyond the face to face contacts among Maya elites, which is one of the foci of this publication. Each of these viewpoints is valid and important to cultural studies, and any full scale investigation of the Classic Maya should include all three kinds of analyses. See Appendix 1 for a discussion of the integration of type:variety and stylistic analyses.

6. See Arnold (1971); Howry (1978). Dean Arnold calls this complex of knowledge and habitual actions an "ethomineralogical cognitive system" (Arnold 1971: 20, 39).

7. R. Thompson (1958).

8. Cf. Perlman and Asaro (1969); Blackman (1986); Bishop, Harbottle, and Sayre (1982). The Maya Polychrome Ceramics Project began under the auspices of the Department of Chemistry, Brookhaven National Laboratory, and moved in 1982 to the Conservation Analytical Laboratory (CAL), Smithsonian Institution. The analyses of additional samples have been carried out at the CAL facilities operating at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST; formerly the National Bureau of Standards). The elemental concentrations used for inferring chemical similarities among the analyzed samples' ceramic pastes include Rb, Cs, Ba, Sc, La, Ce, Eu, Lu, Hf, Th, Ta, Cr, Fe, Co, Sm, Yb, and Ca.

9. Even with our relatively large data base of more than ten thousand samples, however, many areas of the Maya lowlands are not represented or are represented by so few specimens that group statistical evaluation is not possible. We address this problem of limited sampling by making heuristic use of sample to sample similarity in combination with elemental deviation data that have been observed for the large, statistically evaluated groups.

10. The degree of stylistic similarity, or dissimilarity, within a group of visually related vessels is relative to the degree of stylistic diversity of the ceramic corpus out of which the group is identified and against which it is compared. That is to say, style is highly relative and always is affected by the comparative corpus. This inherent characteristic requires that the definition of a particular style include a discussion of the comparative material employed to identify that style. In this way, the style may be better defined in terms of its place within the overall ceramic production of the region and of the culture itself.

11. Only one major art historical stylistic study of Maya painted pottery precedes the present work, and this study focused on the painting styles of one site, that is, of Tikal (Coggins, n.d.). Subsequent studies focusing on the identification of discrete styles of Classic Maya painted pottery by researchers during the 1980s other than Reents-Budet and Bishop include Beaudry (1984), Kerr and Kerr (n.d.), Reents-Budet, Bishop and Fahsen (n.d.), and Robiesek and Hales (1981).

12. Absent from this discussion are such important styles as the Codex style because this is discussed elsewhere (cf. Robiesek and Hales (1981), Reents and Bishop (1987), Hansen, Bishop and Fahsen (1991). The refinements of these styles, the recognition of others and the determination of the workshops' and artists' interrelationships will ensue in the coming years.

13. See M. Coe (1978: 130); also see Reents-Budet and Bishop (n.d.) for an in-depth study of the *Ik'*-style corpus.

14. Justin and Barbara Kerr (n.d.: 4) first recognized and named this ruler the "Fat Cacique" because of his exceptional corpulence.

15. One possible explanation for the lack of plates in this style group may involve their extensive historical narrative imagery, comprised of both text and pictures. The artists would need as much pictorial surface as possible on which to record the data; it can be argued that cylinder vases provide more such space than plates. Additionally, if these vessels were functioning as a permanent record of sociopolitical events, the cylinder vase would provide a pictorial surface that potentially would not be as damaged by use as a plate would. Therefore, the lack of plates in this group would not be surprising. Certainly plates were made and used by the artisans and elite consumers who lived in the *Ik'* polity. But these plates do not appear to have been part of the same socioceramic sphere as vases.

16. The preposition *ti* also appears in complement constructions such as "he goes (to) dancing." Thus far this is the only group of ceramics in which both the preposition and the complementizer appear. The uniform use of *ti* suggests that these Cholan speakers had long interaction with a Yucatecan language.

17. After Reents-Budet and Bishop (n.d.).

18. The *Ik'*-style pottery vessels are notable for the Calendar Round dates recorded in their hieroglyphic texts. Many are partially eroded and the full dates

Dates Recorded on *Ik'*-style Pottery Vessels

Fat Cacique's Lordship

calendar round		*long count date*	*vessel number*
7 Oc	13 Xul*	9.15.15.0.10	MS1121, K533, MS1419, K1452, K1463
3 Ahau	18 Zotz	9.16.3.0.0	The Altar de Sacrificios Vase
4 Ix	12 Cumku	9.16.3.13.14	K791
4 Caban*	10 Yaxkin	9.16.4.2.17	FCcb2-462
or			
4 Ik*	10 Yaxkin	9.16.17.6.2	FCcb2-462
or			
4 Manik*	10 Yaxkin	9.17.10.9.7	FCcb2-462
7 Oc	8 Mol	9.16.15.6.10	MS1373
7 Oc	13 Muan*	9.17.6.16.10	(the alternative reconstructed date for 7 Oc 13 Xul, see above for MS1121, K533, MS1419, K1452, K1463). This date falls closer to the other recorded dates for the "Fat Cacique" and Lord Completion Star, who are featured on these vessels. This later date, then, is more probable than the earlier reconstructed one.
1 Manik	5 Kayab	9.17.8.0.7	MS1373
?	? Uo, Zip	???	K534

Style 4 only

3 Ahau	18 Zotz	9.16.3.0.0	The Altar de Sacrificios Vase
4 Ix	12 Cumku	9.16.3.13.14	K791
7 Oc	8 Mol	9.16.15.6.10	MS1373
1 Manik	5 Kayab	9.17.8.0.7	MS1373

*denotes reconstructed dates

must be reconstructed. These dates place the production of the vessels between 9.15.15.0.0 and 9.17.10.0.0 (or A.D. 749–800, that is, the latter part of the Tepeu 2 ceramic period).

Kevin Johnston, Department of Anthropology, Yale University, also has done extensive research on these vessels, and he freely shared his ideas with Reents-Budet. Johnston shares the credit for much of the glyphic research presented above.

19. Differences in time when the vessels were produced also surely affected stylistic and qualitative variability seen in the surviving *Ik'* ceramic corpus. More archeological work in the area is needed before more stylistic and chemical investigations can ensue concerning the *Ik'*-style pottery.

20. Time also acts as a [illegible] whereby the exploited [illegible] the clay and temper recipes [illegible] generation to the next. [illegible]

[illegible] first des[illegible] format as [illegible] Kerr, Grube, 1992: [illegible] verbal phrases [illegible] vessels demonstrating [illegible] comprised of the glyph [illegible] followed by the name of the [illegible] the person is dancing [illegible] the dance object] [illegible] The vessels in this [illegible] MS1121, LC-cb2-462, [illegible] see Schele and Miller, [illegible] Plate 71; MS1403 (see M. Coe, 1978: [illegible] see Kerr, 1989:123), LC-cb2-[illegible] the Liverpool Art Museum Vase. [illegible] numbers are the vessels' archival [illegible] in the Maya Photographic [illegible] Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, [illegible] This archive contains hundreds of [illegible] Hellmuth's color photographic [illegible] Classic Period polychrome pot[illegible] and Barbara Kerr (n.d.) first [illegible] the work of, and named, the [illegible] the Pink Glyphs.

22. Other vessels painted by the Mas[illegible] the Pink Glyphs include K1452, [illegible] commemorates the same event as [illegible] on MS1122 (K1452 is published [illegible] Schele and Miller, 1986:Plate 71), a tall [illegible] in the collection of the Liverpool Art Museum; and LC-cb2-443 (see the Maya Photographic Archive, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.). Two more x-ray style [illegible] K1506 and MS1403, also may be [illegible] work of this master (see M. Coe, 1978: [illegible]), although they lack the sureness of [illegible] that characterizes his work. It should be noted that both vases have suffered heavy surface erosion, and MS1403 has been repainted in modern times.

A closely related vase is found in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago (see Schele and Miller, 1986:Plate 92). It shares the x-ray depiction of masked dancers, a main protagonist whose corpulence recalls the "Fat Cacique," and the *Ik'* emblem glyph. Schele and Miller identify this work as belonging to the Master of the Pink Glyphs.

23. The vessels in this group include MS1419 (LC-cb2-442), LC-cb2-415, LC-cb2-441, LC-cb2-445 and K680. The imagery painted on K680 (see Kerr, 1989:34) features the presentation of prisoners to an enthroned lord and his gathered dignitaries. The prisoners are to be ritually sacrificed by decapitation. The lord's throne resembles the scaffold of sacrifice depicted on the Art Institute of Chicago's x-ray vase (from Group 1; see Schele and Miller, 1986:Plate 92). K680's pictorial program, compositional format and palette closely resemble those of the Liverpool Vase of Group 1, including the enthroned lord who closely resembles the "Fat Cacique." K680 has been heavily repainted in modern times.

24. MS1419 may be more closely related artistically to the Liverpool Art Museum's tall cylinder, which has been placed tentatively into Group 1. I have not examined this vase personally since the only extant photographic record is research color slides taken by Linda Schele. It should be mentioned that one of the other personal names found in the short texts on MS1419 also is found on K534 of Group 3, this name (and person) provides a historical link between these two groups.

25. These vessels include K534, MS1134, MS1437, MS1160, a vase in the collection of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City (see Schele and Miller, 1986:Plate 88), K1050 (see Kerr, 1989:56), K2625 (see Kerr, 1990:204), K1498 (see Kerr, 1989:92) and LC-cb2-448 (see the Maya Photographic Archive, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.).

26. Many of these supernatural co-essences are the same as the supernatural figures depicted on MS0739 (see Chapter 6). The famous Altar de Sacrificios Vase is included in this style group (see Adams, 1971).

27. It is highly probable that some of these vases were produced later than the mid-eighth-century A.D. times of the "Fat Cacique" and Lord Completion-Star.

28. Also see K2763 (Kerr, 1990:282), K1454 (Kerr, 1989:87) and K787 (Kerr, 1989:48) for other Ik'-like vessels whose stylistic diversity removes them from the main styles but yet whose shared features suggest they probably are part of the regional production. Two vases in the collection of The Mint Museum, Charlotte, North Carolina, depict corpulent dancers with the x-ray style mask representations and have the group's characteristic rose-colored glyphs (also see Kerr, 1989: 19, 56, 92).

29. This same *Sac Muan* appears in the PSS on MS1526 as the vase's owner/patron (see Figure 6.38), as observed by Simon Martin (1993 personal communication). Lord *Sac Muan* may be one of the central figures depicted on this vase.

30. Archaeological investigations in the Río Pasión/Petexbatún area have recovered pottery with stylistic and hieroglyphic affinities with the *Ik'* pottery

corpus and the *Ik'* site itself (personal observations, 1991; Paul Mathews, 1992: personal communication). Stephen Houston's decipherment of the hieroglyphic records from Dos Pilas and other sites in the area has discovered that some of these texts record the capture in war of *Ik'* site lords by Dos Pilas Ruler 4 and a lord from Machaquila (Houston, 1993: 117, 124). The dates associated with Ruler 4 coincide with dates painted on many of the *Ik'*-style vessels. Further research promises to define more clearly the sociopolitical interaction between the *Ik'* and Petexbatun polities and the roles played therein by the pottery.

31. Plain stelae do not have carved imagery but instead probably were covered with white stucco and painted with historical imagery. None of this imagery has survived, however. Carved stelae whose texts include the *Ik'* emblem glyph are known from Motul de San Jose, Flores (on Stela 1; Simon Martin, 1993: personal communication) and on a wall carving near Bejucal (Peter Mathews, 1987: personal communication). Most of the images and texts carved on these monuments, however, are not well preserved.

32. Reported in Merwin and Vaillant (1932). See Reents (n.d.) for an in-depth analysis of the Holmul-style pottery.

33. For discussions of the underworld, death and apotheosis interpretation of the Holmul dancer theme, see Reents (n.d.) and Reents-Budet (1991). Schele (1980) and Schele and Miller (1986) provide further details of the postmortem "dance of apotheosis." Among the modern Quiche, it is through dance that they bring back into the world of the living the souls of the deceased ancestors (Sexela, 1992: 137). Other Classic Period renditions of this theme are found on Naranjo Area Group vessels and Tikal Dancer plates.

34. See Reents-Budet (1991) and Reents (n.d.) for a discussion of the Holmul dancer theme. Karl Taube (1992: 49–50) has identified this theme as pertaining to the Classic Period Tonsured Maize God (the post-Classic God E), who is the ancestral form of the sixteenth-century Quiche *Hun Hunahpu*, father of the Hero Twins of the *Popol Vuh*. The characters seated in the backracks probably are supernatural co-essences (or *way* figures) of the dancers. Their name glyphs include the mainsigns of many emblem glyphs, which has led to the suggestion that these pottery texts refer to places. A more likely interpretation considers these mainsigns as part of the nominals of these supernatural co-essences. Emblem glyphs probably derive from the patronyms of each polity's ruling family, who in turn based their power on their connection with these supernatural co-essences. See Houston (1993: 124) and Mathews and Justeson (1984) for discussions of emblem glyphs as referring to political units (polities) and patronyms.

35. The Maya Polychrome Ceramics Project has sampled approximately 50 unprovenienced and 25 provenienced Holmul-style whole vessels, and more than 125 provenienced potsherds painted in this style. The majority of the provenienced samples come from Holmul, Lamanai, Buenavista and sites in its vicinity, and Yaxox, Belize.

36. Michael Coe (1973, 1978) was the first to recognize these two vases as the creations of the same painter.

37. The master artist *Ah-Maxam* of MS1374, MS1375 and the Vase of the Seven Gods uses both the *vuch ch'ahal* and *vuch naab* forms of the "vase" word, suggesting that these were alternates in the lexicon of his workshop and that he was exercising his graphic virtuosity. Linguistic markers in these texts and in the contemporary stelae of Naranjo point to Cholan as the language of this set.

38. See Ball and Taschek (1991) and Taschek and Ball (1992) for discussions of the Buenavista excavations. Among the stylistic characteristics that define the Holmul-style pottery made at Buenavista are the barrel-shaped cylinder vases and polychrome jars, and a more extensive use of black paint on the exterior of pot forms and highlighting vertical glyph bands on cylinder vases. In general, the corpus represents quickly executed, lesser quality painting, some of which is among the least accomplished of any vessels painted in this style, and a preponderance of pseudoglyphs and repetitive signs. Many of the vessels' basal and band bands were painted with blue stucco. Iconographically, the Buenavista set follows the style group's predominant themes, although the majority of the dancers face to the viewer's right rather than to the left, as is usual for Vase [illegible]. These observations lead to the [illegible] that the Buenavista painters were [illegible] in the artistic [illegible] product, from those of other [illegible] of Holmul-style potters. [illegible] profiles of the potters [illegible] within the group [illegible]

[illegible] Schele (1992) [illegible] that the Milky Way is [illegible] of Xibalba (the Vista Fe), that is, the realm of the ancestral dead and of the gods. Among the modern Quiche (K'iche'), it is through dance that they bring back into the world of the living the souls of the ancestors (Schele, 1992:137).

41. Three Holmul style vessels imported to Uaxactun are illustrated in R. E. Smith (1955:vol 2; figures 2, 9 and 73). The *hawte'*-shaped plate was found in Burial A38 (Smith, 1955:vol. 2; Figure 9).

42. See Ball (1975) and Forsyth (1983). The archaeological and art market literature illustrate similarly shaped and hued plates painted with images of hunters or dancers, whose imagery diverges from the death and underworld theme of the Turkey Vulture plates. This thematic divergence may suggest that some of these plates had functions outside the funerary environment. Sherds of this ceramic type have been excavated at Edzná from nonfunerary architectural fill. Further, some plates are highly eroded on their interior surfaces, suggesting extensive use as service ware among the living. As an archaeological ceramic type, Cui Orange-polychrome pottery includes round-sided bowls, hooked rim jars and cylindrical vases painted with geometric designs and glyphic motifs (Forsyth, 1983:87, Figure 23). This variability in shape points to the pottery also being a service ware rather than a purely funerary one.

43. See Ball (1975:32–33) for a justification of this singularity of function. The author considers the archaeological contexts in which these plates usually are found (in burials) as well as their pictorial programs, which recount underworld themes.

44. The Muan bird's Classic Period name seems to be *Oxlahun Chan* (13 Sky) (Schele and Freidel, 1990:410–11). Gucumatz, one of the principle lords of the underworld and the deity who presided over the assemblage of the gods at creation, wears a hat comprised of the feathers of the Muan bird. He is the main deity depicted on the Vase of the Seven Gods (K2796, Figure 2.32 and catalog 11).

45. Forsyth (1983:Figure 22n) illustrates the only glyphlike motifs found on the pottery from Edzna. These motifs can better be described as pseudoglyphs that make reference to the idea of hieroglyphs rather than serving as readable signs replicating language.

46. Chemical characterization by the MPCP for Late Classic polychrome pottery production in these coastal sites and sites in western Yucatan is scant. Thus site attribution remains hypothetical at this time, especially for Acanceh, which has been suggested to be one of the production sites for Cui Orange-polychrome.

47. The *-il* suffix is found on some adjectives in Cholan and Yucatecan. Overall, however, the very limited glyphic evidence suggests that the Chama tradition is linguistically Cholan.

48. *K'at* is the word for clay in Yucatec Mayan.

49. See Dieseldorff (1904:664, Plate LXIX) for a drawing of the Camazotz' vase he excavated from a burial atop a mound at Chamá. The entry for *bubut* is found in the Yucatecan Cordemex dictionary (Barrera Vasquez, 1980:67).

50. See Morley (1946 Plate 88) for drawings of two of the processional Chama-style vases; the Ratinlinxul Vase (also spelled 'Ratinlixul' by Dillon [1977:65]) and the so called Chama Vase. M. Coe (1978:64–65) and Mason and Gordon (1925 Plate II) illustrate the Chama Vase. Mason and Gordon (1925 Plate VII)

illustrate the vase depicting the seated lords. M. Coe (1978:64) and Closs (1992:101–102) believe the scene on the Chama Vase depicts a meeting of supernatural beings rather than a historical encounter among warriors and or merchants. They identify them based on their costumes as deities.

51. Three vases painted with this orchestral imagery are known. The third one is illustrated by Dieseldorff (Dieseldorff, 1926:Tafel 22). The only iconographic variation between the Dieseldorff Vase and MS0245 and MS0246 is the addition of a dancing water lily jaguar and the presence of short (probably nominal) glyphic phrases painted next to the dancing musicians. This seemingly supernatural orchestral processional scene may be funerary in nature, based on imagery painted on a vase in *The Maya Vase Book* photographic corpus. This vessel combines the same scene as one on the Ratinlinxul Vase in which a lord is carried in a hammock-litter and the orchestral procession, this latter vase's orchestra including many of the same instruments seen on MS0245 and MS0246. Justin Kerr (n.d.) and Elizabeth Benson (1993:personal communication) have made a convincing argument that this scene depicts the soul's journey into the underworld.

52. See Mason and Gordon (1925: Plate LIII) for a drawing of another continuous scene vase wherein possibly God L (note the Muan bird feathers) and a rabbit headed figure sit beside a filled basket.

53. After R. E. Smith (1952:122) and Butler (1973:256–61).

54. See Dieseldorff (1974:53–54) for a discussion of the Ratinlinxul Vase. His excavations in the Chama Valley are discussed in his 1974 and 1926 publications.

[illegible]

55. It is difficult to address the function of the Chama style pottery for reasons. First, those from archaeological contexts generally have suffered a significant amount of erosion, [illegible] forces, making it difficult to assess any use-wear patterns. Second, the majority of Chama style whole vessels [illegible] archaeological provenience [illegible] most function indicators [illegible]. Further, many of the improved [illegible] vessels have been repainted in a manner [illegible] masking any use-wear marks that may have been present. Dieseldorff [illegible] observes that the process, [illegible] found in a burial mound at Chama, was well preserved and did not seem [illegible] been used prior to burial.

56. The sites in the Chama Valley generally lack extensive monumental architecture, and no carved stone monuments with historical hieroglyphic texts have been found at any of the sites. The absence of these and many other [illegible] of elite Maya culture certainly [illegible] and politically important [illegible] cating lesser intensification of [illegible] stratified sociopolitical structure. New archaeological investigations [illegible] to address this situation.

59. The Tikal Dancer pot [illegible] and iconographic precedents [illegible] by Coggins (n.d.: [illegible]) and [illegible] Bishop and MacLeod [illegible] of the ceramics from [illegible] Smith also described the [illegible] on Tepeu I plates [illegible] 1952.

60. See Coggins [illegible] tion at both sites [illegible] 1975: [illegible] for produc[illegible]

61. See Recent Books [illegible] MacLeod [illegible]

[illegible] Schele [illegible] Miller (1986) for [illegible] essential part of Classic [illegible] and its repre- [illegible] Gallenkamp and [illegible] has made the same [illegible]

[illegible] See Sabloff and Freidel (1991) for [illegible] Tikal's sociopolitical and [illegible] competition with its neighbors. [illegible] See Pendergast (1969:12) and (1979: [illegible] 11: 42a,b,f; 43h; 44j; 45c,d, [illegible] similar vessels and sherds that [illegible] the same ceramic type (Petkanche [illegible] polychrome) were excavated at [illegible] Ha from the same contexts. Sty- [illegible] however, these objects lack [illegible] same division of pictorial space and [illegible] black background, have no [illegible] glyphic texts, and are painted with [illegible] geometrical motifs. The group is [illegible] represented mostly by round sided bowl [illegible] rather than cylinder vases (and [illegible] and plates that comprise the Altun Ha style group. It is highly probable that these bowls relate spatially and tempo- [illegible] to the Altun Ha-style vessels. How- [illegible] their different shape, more simplistic [illegible] and lack of hieroglyphic texts [illegible] a different function, consumer [illegible] and or sociopolitical sphere. [illegible] the identification of a style [illegible] it is possible to isolate pottery [illegible] ceramic type that prob- [illegible] specialized functions. Such [illegible] of the [illegible] of objects is [illegible] for interpretations of the archaeological record.

66. With the exception of K2993 (Figure 5.43) where a *ts'ib* glyph follows the "vase" glyph, presumably reading *v'uch ab*. Because the wing is present in the lower right portion of the rollout photo of this vase, an alternative reading is that the mainsign of most of these Altun Ha-style "wingless Wing Quincunx" vase glyph compounds is a *ch'ab* sign, perhaps a variant of the half-head allograph of T128.

67. Given the known intensive social, political and economic interaction that characterizes the Classic Period, many Maya probably were bilingual. It would not be unusual for the elite pottery painters to be conversant in both Cholan and Yucatecan languages, especially if they were living near the geographic borders between different language groups.

68. Vessels or sherds painted in this style have been found at Aventura, Sarteneja, Caledonia, Cuello, Moho Cay (located in northern and central Belize) and at an unspecified site on the Rio Hondo in northern Belize (Gann, 1918). The famous Blom Plate was found on the outskirts of modern Chetumal, Quintana Roo, Mexico, located just north of Aventura, Belize (Blom, 1956). The style has been found at other Yucatan and Quintana Roo sites, including Dzibilchaltun, Coba, Tancah, and Xcalak (Ball in Sidrys 1974). Joseph Ball reports Altun Ha-style pottery from Becan, Campeche (Ball 1977:Figure 20.1). All examples are part of the Petkanche Orange polychrome ceramic type.

69. Joseph Ball suggests that Petkanche Orange polychrome Petkanche Variety represents a specific pottery production in a restricted area and distribution throughout the region in a complex exchange network of the seventh into early eighth centuries A.D. (Ball in Sidrys 1974:217). Our analyses confirm his original suggestion and identify the Altun Ha area as the location of at least some of the workshops that were creating this pottery, although the chemical variability noted in the Becan sherds imply other locations outside Altun Ha as well.

70. William Fash (1991:22) has identified this so-called "Cemetery Group" as an elite residential compound.

71. In his analysis of Copan's ceramics in the 1950s, John M. Longyear III recognized this vase as an imported object and connected it stylistically with the Altun Ha-style Rio Hondo Vase from northern Belize (Longyear, 1973:268–71).

72. Interaction between these two regions has been discussed by Bishop and Beaudry (n.d.).

73. Joyce (1991:22).

74. The exceptionally deep and parallel scratches on the lip and rim of MS 253 may indicate that this vase originally had a lid, and that these wear marks were caused by the removal and replacement of the lid during use of the vase.

75. The Naranjo Area Group style is part of the Saxche Orange polychrome ceramic type, dating from the Tikal III ceramic phase as defined at Uaxactun [illegible] in Maya long count dates of A.D. [illegible]. This phase has recently been [illegible] by Joseph Ball and [illegible] [illegible] subsequent [illegible] [illegible] Tikal III [illegible] [illegible] Tikal III [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

76. For discussions of the warfare between Caracol and Tikal, see Houston (1985), Chase and Chase (1987), Schele and Freidel (1990), and Gutierrez (1993).

77. See Bishop, Reents, Harbottle, Sayre and van Zelst (1985) for a discussion of the stylistic and chemical analyses of the Naranjo Area Group (previously called "Area Group").

78. GIII may represent the sun in the underworld. Also, Dennis Tedlock (n.d.:26) makes a strong case for GIII *Xbalanque* being the nighttime sun, that is, the full nocturnal moon.

79. Schele and Miller (1986:50, 52) discuss the Jaguar God of the Underworld and the Paddler Twins. The Paddlers are best known from four incised bones found in *Hasaw Ka'an K'awil*'s tomb at Tikal (illustrated in Schele and Miller, 1986, Figure VII.1). The scenes carved on these bones metaphorically depict the journey of the human soul after death as a canoe voyage into the waters of the underworld. The canoe is manned by the Jaguar Paddler and the Stingray Paddler. The model in the natural environment for this event is the movement of the Milky Way across the ecliptic (Schele, 1992:126–49). This is remarkably similar to the modern Peruvian Quechua Indians' interpretation of the Milky Way as the *pasamayo*, that is, the numinous river in the sky and the path along which the shaman travels during his magical flights.

80. The Celestial Bird has square squint eyes and a mirror in his forehead, both of which characterize solar deities. See Cortez (n.d.) and Schele (1992) for discussions of this supernatural, and Schele (1992:128) for the discovery of the bird's Classic Period name.

81. Although drawn from the Naranjo Area Group, which is restricted to red background color and straight-sided cylindrical shape, the palette of MS1120 includes the somewhat unusual gray slip color (which may originally have been a green hue now faded). Interestingly, the chemical profile of MS1120 resembles that of the Naranjo Area Group vessels. These data, combined with the similar iconographic programs, suggest that all these vessels were made in the same area. Their differences may represent variables caused by time (the Naranjo Area Group pots were produced approximately eighty years earlier than MS1120), spatial separation among the responsible workshops, and/or their artists exploring slightly different aesthetics.

82. The three supernaturals in the canoes on MS1120 also are found on the Vase of the Seven Gods (see Chapter 2). This vase depicts a meeting of the gods at creation, just prior to the separation of the earth from the sky. Six deities sit facing God L, one of the major gods of Creation, three of which may be the same as the three canoers on MS1120. *Ox Lut* stands in the first canoe (GI in his guise as *Yax Naab Chac* [Spero, 1991:190–93]; lower row middle on the Vase of the Seven Gods), the second canoe may contain the deity named *Ha te chu* (possibly the seated figure in the lower row left side on the Vase of the Seven Gods) and Jaguar Paddler in the third canoe (seated in the upper row right side on the Vase of the Seven Gods). Also, see M. Coe (1973), Schele (1992:126–27) and Spero (1991) for discussions of these deities and the Vase of the Seven Gods.

83. A few Naranjo Area Group bowls are painted with pictorial representations of historical events, including the enema ritual undertaken to induce visions during which the participants are in contact with the supernatural realm (cf. K5611 in the Kerr Photographic Archive, New York City).

84. See M. Coe (1973:17–22).

85. See Bishop, Reents, Harbottle, Sayre and van Zelst (1985:83) and Coggins (n.d.: Figure 87b).

86. Two whole Naranjo Area Group style vessels were excavated at Tikal. One was found in Burial 72, the only vaulted tomb discovered outside the North Acropolis by the University of Pennsylvania's archaeological project (Gallenkamp and Johnson, 1985:175). The tomb contained the remains of a woman whose only burial offering was a Naranjo Area Group vessel (Coggins, n.d.:329–30). The bowl's nominal phrase ends with the name of Naranjo Ruler 1. Schele and Freidel (1990:177–78) connect this tomb to the early seventh century A.D. political events involving Tikal, Caracol and Naranjo, wherein Caracol defeats first Tikal and then Naranjo, capturing Ruler 1 (ca. A.D. 625). The authors suggest that this bowl implies that the entombed woman had some special association with Naranjo (marriage or gift exchange) and that ". . . the occasion symbolized by this bowl may have called down the wrath of Caracol on the aged king of Naranjo [Ruler 1]" (Schele and Freidel, 1990:178).

At least three other Naranjo Area Group style vessels found their way to Tikal, including a whole vessel brought to my attention by Dr. Terence [illegible] University of Texas at Austin who photographed this vase at the site and two sherds (MS1078 and MS[illegible]). Outside the central Peten, Naranjo Area Group vessels

[illegible] Unfortunately, these pre-Columbian wooden tools would not normally survive in the wet Maya regions.

93. See R. Thompson (1958) for discussions of modern pottery production techniques among the Maya of Yucatan, Mexico.

94. Among modern Tewa potters of the American Southwest, sandpaper is used to smooth the surface by removing any ridges left from the forming of the pot. The sandpaper also creates a slightly abraded surface that aids in the adherence of the base slip, which is the next stage of production. Although no evidence has yet been found of the Maya employing a similar technique, one of the technical characteristics of the painted pottery is its durable base slips.

95. It appears that covering the white base slip with pigmented slips protects the more powdery base slip.

96. See Shepard (1956) for a discussion of Classic Maya pottery slip paints. Naturally occurring clays that have been burnished by nature are found along stream beds and in similar deposits that have been levigated by geologic sedimentary action (S. Peterson, 1992: 106).

97. See Rhodes (1973: 39–43) for a discussion of deflocculation to create very fine particle clay bodies. Rhodes notes that common surface clays, similar to those we believe the Classic Maya potters were using, contain considerable amounts of iron and free alkalis, which are difficult to process into a fine grained clay product such as terra sigillata. In addition, if the clay contains illites or montmorillonites, as do many of the clays from the Maya regions, these cause the clay particles to group together rather than to float freely. Both these characteristics of Maya region clays suggest that the ancient potters were using a deflocculant to create slip paints.

98. Terra sigillata is used today in the manufacture of drain tiles to make them impervious to water and thus leak-proof.

99. Although an iron oxide (e.g., calcined red iron oxide, magnetite or hematite) can produce a black color, this requires a nonoxidized kiln atmosphere. A reduced atmosphere, however, also would turn gray or black the iron oxides used to achieve red and orange colors. In a reduction atmosphere, the white base slips also would turn gray. Therefore, it would seem that the black colors were produced with a noniron oxide such as manganese, cobalt or copper, which turn black in an oxidized firing atmosphere.

Manganese and manganese-iron paints are stable and do not change during firing unless there is atmospheric reduction. Manganese produces very stable blacks, although it suffers from a lack of sufficient fluxing material to adhere well to the vessel. This problem can be solved by polishing the painted surface, by adding 12 to 22 percent alumina to the paint, or by rubbing some organic lacquerlike material into the fired surface. However manganese is toxic to humans and thus is not the ideal coloring agent for potters used to serve food. Anna Shepard notes the presence of an unidentified clear organic lacquer coating on some Maya vessels (1956: 42). It is possible that an organic based lacquer was used by the Maya to cover manganese based black slips, thus reducing its toxicity and its tendency to erode from the surface of the vessel. The detection of this organic lacquer has eluded analyses, however.

Black paint is created today by Tewa potters in the American Southwest by [illegible] and sugar [illegible]

[illegible] 1968. This black pottery paint [illegible] ated without the use of mineral [illegible] or at clay based paints (terra sigillata). Whether the Classic Maya also [illegible] pottery paints using organic matter [illegible] rently is unknown.

100. Cary Esser (1993 personal communication) suggests that a green color can be achieved at low firing temperatures by the use of copper salts, which are soluble, and therefore fugitive.

101. I am indebted to Cary Esser, ceramic artist in the Department of Art and Art History at Duke University, for her many insights concerning terra sigillata and its various characteristics. Consultations with Ms. Esser have been instrumental in this discussion of how the Classic Maya ceramic artists may have created the polychrome pottery. For additional discussions of terra sigillata in the modern ceramic studio, see Lawrence and West (1982:211–15).

102. See Fash (1991:111) for a discussion of the Copán royal scribe's burial. Other examples of caches containing small containers of mineral pigments are reported from Yucatan (on display at Museo Canton, Merida, Yucatan), from El Ceren, El Salvador (Payson Sheets, 1991:personal communication) and from Aguateca, Guatemala (Takeshi Inomata, 1993 personal communication). Similar small containers for pigments also seem to have been used by the later Aztecs. Friar Bartolome de las Casas, writing between A.D. 1527 and 1550, discusses the various artistic media of the Aztecs. He was particularly impressed with the featherworkers. In describing them, he compares their selective use of colored feathers with the same care by which painters chose their paints. De las Casas [illegible]

[illegible] of the pots, indicative of their [illegible] stacked during the firing process, [illegible] tomary procedure for kiln pre-[illegible] ceramics.

Cary Esser, ceramic artist at [illegible] University, notes that the particles [illegible] of adobe bricks used to construct [illegible] easily disintegrate into sherds [illegible] fired ceramic. Esser (1993 personal communication; also see Chamberlain [illegible]) If the Maya were using sun-[illegible] bricks to make kilns, these [illegible] not be readily identifiable in [illegible] logical record.

105. See Rice (1987) and Shepard [illegible] for discussions of pre-Columbian [illegible] techniques. Also see Reina and H[illegible] for detailed descriptions and [illegible] traditional pottery making among [illegible] Maya in Guatemala.

106. These firing pits were dis[illegible] by archaeologists Susan Kepecs, [illegible] Boucher and James Burton (see Kepecs, Boucher and Burton, 1994).

107. Linda Roundhill, conserv[illegible] the Duke University Museum of A[illegible] covered the resurfacing of ves[illegible] careful observations and mic[illegible] investigations.

108. Two renowned modern North American potters from Acoma, [illegible] Emma Lewis Mitchell and De[illegible] Garcia, are adamant that we[illegible] special yucca fiber brushes [illegible] not be able to create the [illegible] Acoma pottery painting style [illegible] in Vitelli, 1991).

109. For example, at B[illegible] and Tascaca (1987), Qu[illegible] (1988), and Copán (1[illegible]).

110. Linda Schele [illegible] ognized these motifs [illegible] rested an intricate we[illegible]

[illegible] sculpture [illegible] technologies could only [illegible] though historically [illegible] building upon the [illegible] of their predecessors. [illegible] and ethnographic data on [illegible] in Mesoamerica con- [illegible] describe family-based production [illegible] successive generations [illegible] the artistic traditions of their [illegible]

111. Grube (1990:328).

112. Division of labor, wherein specialists in painting and stucco sculpture worked side-by-side on the same project, [illegible] in Pacal's tomb. A master artist painted the imagery on the wall, and stucco sculptors then applied the plaster and carved the reliefs. Interestingly, the sculptors did not follow faithfully the master painter's imagery, and apparently were free to exert their own aesthetics in this joint artistic venture (Schele and Miller 1986:39–40).

113. See Schele and Miller (1986:39). The remarkable curvilinearity and line width variability seen in the imagery of such incised stone monuments as the Tablet of the Ninety-Six Glyphs at Palenque recall freehand painting rather than carving in stone. It is likely that artists such as the one responsible for this monument were highly skilled calligraphers who could work in different media (Linda Schele, 1985:personal communication).

[illegible] been suggested that the [illegible] painters moved around much like [illegible] painters for hire during Renaissance times in Europe. Material evidence for this kind of artist for hire would include two vessels painted by the same person but whose chemical profiles were radically different. This dissimilarity would imply two different mixtures of clays and tempers such as one would find in workshops from two areas or sites. To date, we have found no convincing data to support this point. Arguing against the frequent movement of master painters from one workshop to another is the probable necessity of long-standing experience with the particular slip paints developed by the individual workshops taking into account the perquisites of local clays. Although with minimal experimentation, a master painter certainly could adapt his techniques and aesthetic desires to the nuances of particular slip paints and pots, this does require experimentation that is costly in terms of work time and artistic effort. In the short term, then, master painters may not have moved from workshop to workshop, although the differences among the clays and slip paints would not preclude longer-term movements by these masters.

115. See Reents (n.d.:214–22) for additional discussions of pottery and painters of the Late Classic pictorial pottery.

116. See Chapter 4. Also see Hansen, Bishop and Fahsen (1991), MacLeod (n.d.:423–51), Reents and Bishop (1987), Robicsek and Hales (1981).

117. Cary Esser (1993:personal communication) suggests that this type of spalling only happens during firing. If this be the case, MS1127 would provide evidence for two firings of the vessel.

118. Harrison (1972: p. [illegible])

119. Schele and Miller (1986:[illegible])

120. Schele and Miller (1986:[illegible])

121. See Schele and Miller (1986: 219–20) for a discussion of this monument.

122. Berlin (1985:163).

123. For dissenting views, see Coggins (n.d.:333) and Schele and Miller (1986:153). Schele and Miller suggest that the master painted the PSS rim text on MS1118 and that apprentices worked on secondary parts of the pot's imagery (see catalog 73).

124. Paula Krotser (1987) has documented this same correlation in the ceramics of Teotihuacán. In the Maya region, the production of elite versus nonelite ceramics is well documented. Recently, calculations by Joseph Ball and Jennifer Taschek (1991) at Buenavista, Belize, provide an idea of the site's proportions of elite versus nonelite artisans. Buenavista was a relatively peripheral or low-level site in terms of the hierarchy of Late Classic Maya cities. Ball and Taschek estimate that 37 percent of the site's total open space was utilized for nonelite production, whereas 3 percent of the site's total architecture was dedicated to the pursuits of specialized artists who were attached to elite residential compounds. These data provide a preliminary proportionality of elite versus nonelite pottery production at Buenavista.

6. Pictorial Themes of Classic Maya Pottery

The pre-Columbian Maya pottery artists moved far beyond simple decoration to create elaborate and expressive pictorial expressions of history and myth. The pictorial images became so complex that vessel forms and their ritualized food service function were superseded by the artistic, social and political uses to which these objects were put. Here form follows function in that the vessel shape becomes simpler during the Late Classic Period in order to provide an appropriate surface plane on which to create a painting.

The broad range of pictorial images reflects the intricacies of Classic Maya civilization, and the study of these representations provides avenues to understanding the fundamentals of Maya cosmology and history. As has been intimated for both modern and pre-Columbian Maya textiles, these painted images express Maya world view and history as well as the artist's relationships therewith.[1] The painted scenes range from depictions of single or small groupings of animals, humans and supernaturals to multifaceted representations of historical and supernatural events. The more complicated compositions include three or more actors plus the paraphernalia pertinent to the event. The artists utilize the accompanying hieroglyphic texts not only for recording the Primary Standard Sequence and specific details about the depicted scene but also as compositional devices to segment the pictorial field (cf. K2796; Figure 6.1). In some cases, the texts even function as architectural elements (cf. figures 1.10 and 6.52).

In order to present the rich pictorial tradition, this study divides the pottery imagery into the following categories: (1) the natural environment, comprised primarily of representations of animals; (2) historical scenes which include events taking place inside palaces, hunting scenes, the important Mesoamerican ballgame and representations of the soul's journey after death; and (3) images of supernatural characters or deities and depictions of transcendent events, some of which certainly are narratives from the Quiche Maya epic tale of creation, the *Popol Vuh*.[2]

It should be stressed that these three categories are artificial divisions employed only as an organizational device for this overview. With the possible exception of the category of representations of events from the *Popol Vuh*, there is no underlying assumption that these reflect pre-Columbian categories of imagery or thought. In fact, the division between historical and supernatural images and scenes is a Western concept that runs counter to Maya belief. For example, in her analysis of Yucatec Mayan literature recorded soon after the [illegible]

6.1 K2796; the Vase of the Seven Gods

Ah-Maxam, the artist who painted this vase used both the Primary Standard Sequence and the long vertical text to bless the vase for its intended uses as well as to record specific details about the depicted scene. These texts serve a third function as compositional devices to segment the pictorial field. *Also see catalog 11.*

6.1

political ascendancy in the sixteenth century, anthropological linguist Victoria Bricker has established that for the Yucatec Maya history and myth are not separate entities.[3] Bricker points out that the two are part of the same phenomenon of human-deity existence and that Maya history reenacts Maya mythology.

Looking back to the Classic Period, this same intertwining is found on the carved stone monuments that depict Maya rulers and recount "history." The iconography of the costumes worn by these elites and the icons surrounding them reconfirm the ruler's role as a figure who reenacts the mythological events that are the foundation of Maya civilization and that maintain the continuity of the cosmos. When a ruler dons the costume of a deity and participates in a ritual, he is not *acting* in the Western sense. Instead, he becomes the deity (or the deity is transformed and enters the person's body), and the ritual moves into the sphere of the supernatural, even though the event takes place inside a palace or in the main plaza for all to witness. Here the boundary

natural to the
may be impossible and even inappro
ue whether a scene painted on a vase is his
or mythological. In many instances, it probably

The Natural Environment

Images of animals and plants have long held the attention of artists worldwide, comprising a shared visual language across cultures and through time. The pre-Columbian and modern Maya community and its architectural manifestations are embedded in the natural environment; together they carry on a continuous dialogue between themselves and the cosmological beliefs that underlie the civilization. In Maya art, then, it is not surprising that iconography of the natural environment functions as decoration, expresses life and is symbolic of cosmological beliefs. These wide-ranging roles of the plant and animal kingdoms are reflected in the equally broad range of depictions of the natural realm on the Classic Period pottery.[4]

In pre-Columbian and modern Maya mythology, animals can be sentient beings who possess speech, thought and supernatural powers. For example, in the pre-Columbian epic *Popol Vuh*, one of the main underworld characters is *Camazotz'*, the killer bat who tricks the Hero Twins and bites off the head of *Hunahpu*. *Camazotz'* frequently is depicted on pottery, especially pottery from the Chamá region of highland Guatemala (MS0250; Figure 6.2). He has outstretched wings marked with disembodied eyes, bears his deadly fangs, emits

6.2 MS0250

Camazotz', the killer bat of the underworld who tricks the Hero Twins and bites off the head of *Hun Ahpu*, embellishes this vase. His outstretched wings are marked with disembodied eyes and he bares his deadly fangs. *Also see catalog 60.*

6.3 MS1426

The repetitions of a bat's head create a dynamic design field. At the same time, this icon may be emblematic of a particular social group or ruling family, similar to the heraldic emblems of European royal lineages

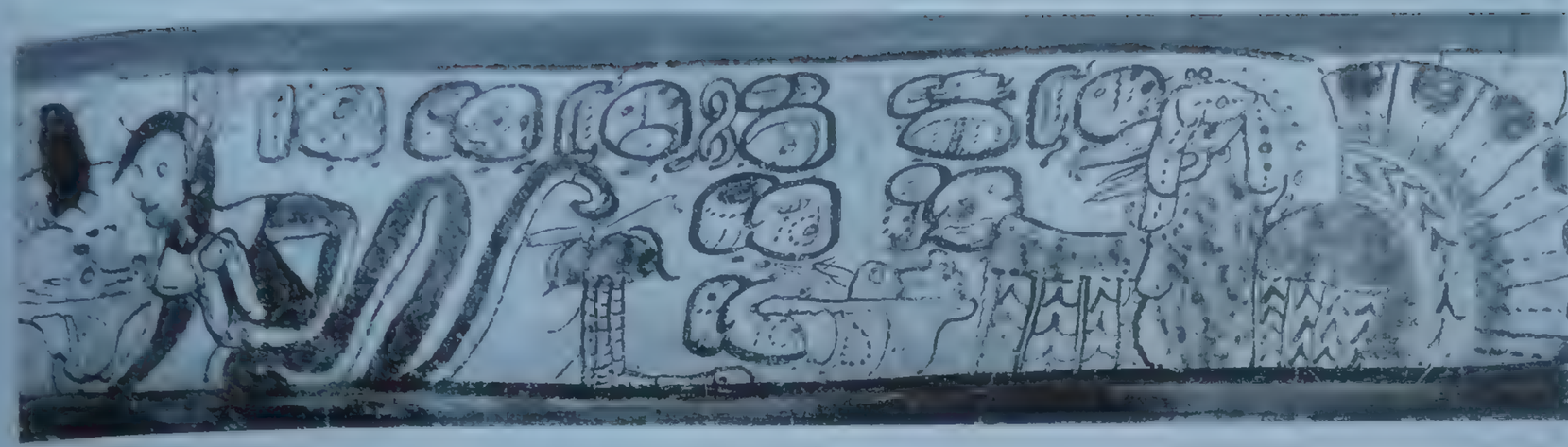
Also see catalog 70

6.4

6.5

red-colored scrolls from his mouth (which may represent bad breath and/or sacrificial blood) and sometimes prominently displays his sexual organ.[5] *Camazotz'* survives among the modern Tzotzil of Zinacantan, Chiapas, Mexico, who associate the bat with the *hʔik'al*, a black-colored demon who beheads humans. Both the bat and the *hʔik'al* have bad odor, suck the life juices from living things (nectar and blood), are transformational beings able to change from earth to sky creatures and are associated with eroticism or illicit sex.[6]

Other styles of pottery from the Guatemalan highlands feature multiple repetitions of the head of a bat, creating a dynamic design field (cf. MS1426; Figure 6.3). Although this bat head icon may make reference to the supernatural *Camazotz'* and the *Popol Vuh*, it is just as possible that the artist's inspiration stems from other mythology, the natural environment and sociopolitical human needs. This overlap between mythological events and human history comprises an important basis for the power and legitimacy of Maya social and political structures, and some of these faunal depictions probably evoke both while serving as conscious emblems for particular social groups and ruling families, similar to the heraldic emblems of European royal families and city-states. For example, the bat head may be emblematic of a Classic Period family or town, much like the modern Tzotzil Maya of Zinacantan, who have adopted the bat as their identifying emblem. The men of this town wear jackets embellished with a stylized representation of the bat.[7]

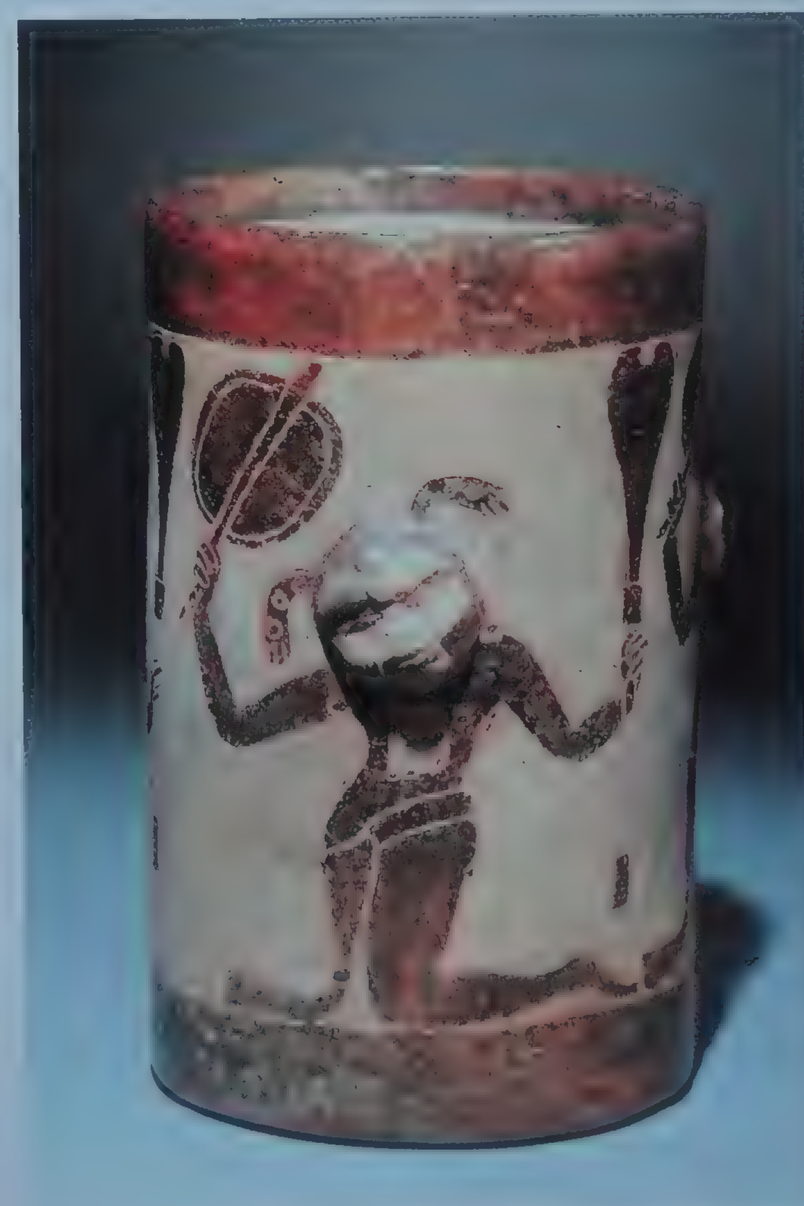


6.4 K5622

Spider monkeys hang from vines that twist up the sides of the bowl and encircle it just below the row of three-dimensional monkey faces embellishing the bowl's upper register. These faces occupy the pictorial space that usually is painted with a PSS text.

At the same time, the Maya acknowledged the intellectual differences between humans and animals as part of their worldview based on such oppositions as nature and culture, living and dead, human and animal. In the *Popol Vuh*, when the gods were displeased with one of their first attempts to create humanity from wood—these early humans behaved improperly and refused to obey the gods—they turned these humanoids into simians who forever were doomed to chatter meaninglessly while swinging through the trees. Their inability to speak drew a clear line between sentient humans and animals. We find naturalistic representations of monkeys frequently embellishing the Classic Period pottery, these images possibly making reference to the Creation mythology (K5622 and K2592; figures 6.4 and 6.5).

Classic Period artists distinguish between monkeys from the animal kingdom and supernatural monkeys such as *Hun Batz* and *Hun Chuen*, the evil half-brothers of the Hero Twins who were turned into monkeys as punishment for their ill-treatment of the Twins (see Chapter 2). Supernatural monkeys, or human impersonators thereof, are identified by their combined human and animal characteristics including such attributes as



6.5 K2592

Two monkeys cavort on this incised vase. They hold their arms and tails in upraised positions reminiscent of their antics while swinging through the canopy of the lowland jungle forest.

6.6 K2010

On this Codex-style vase, a spider monkey wears the sacrificial scarf and a deer's ear. He holds a deep plate in which are found dismembered body parts.

6.7 MS1678

A human dancer impersonates a spider monkey. His dance costume includes a monkey mask and he holds a dance fan and trumpet in his upraised arms.

6.8 MS1401

The catfish frequently is rendered on this red background style of pottery, which was made in the central Petén lowlands of Guatemala. This fish is recognized by the characteristic barbel hanging from the mouth and by the slightly curving dorsal spines. After having sacrificing themselves in a bonfire in the underworld, the Hero Twins magically reappeared as catfish. (From the collection of The Art Museum, Princeton University. Museum purchase, gift in memory of John S. Price, Jr., by his family, friends and colleagues.)

a deer's ear. In addition, sometimes they wear the sacrificial scarf tied around their shoulders (cf. K2010; Figure 6.6) or the so-called "death collars" decorated with disembodied eyes.[8] Human impersonators of monkeys are identified by their extreme anthropomorphic bodies rendered in humanlike poses. This artistic approach is exemplified by the dancing human who wears a monkey mask on MS1678 (Figure 6.7). In addition to the full head mask, his body is painted to resemble a spider monkey with its characteristic white chest and dark brown body fur. Among the modern Maya, the monkey is an important character in folk tales and in the sacred festivities of Carnaval. During the three days of Carnaval, men wear costumes that transform them into monkeys. They sing, dance, make rude jokes and act like the improper people of the first Creation who the Gods turned into monkeys as punishment for their inappropriate behavior.[9]

Among the aquatic animals found on particular styles of pottery are ichthyoids (figures 6.8 and 6.9). Images of catfish characterize one style of pottery created in the central Petén lowlands near Lake Petén-Itzá (cf. MS1401; Figure 6.8). The catfish species is recognized by the characteristic barbel hanging from the mouth and by the slightly curving dorsal spines.[10] Although these may be images of the natural world, they also may make reference to the Hero Twins. In the *Popol Vuh*, the Lords of the underworld killed the Twins, pulverized their bones and threw them into the river of *Xibalba*. Later, the Hero Twins magically reappeared in the river as catfish.[11]

6.9 MS0661 and MS1516

Freshwater fish are depicted on the insides of these two bowls surrounded by water lilies. Their round bodies and spotted flanks closely resemble the *Petenia splendida*, a whitefish frequently found in the lakes of the Petén lowlands. *Also see catalogs 65 and 66*

6.10 MS0053

A turtle functions as the knob on this vase's lid, swimming in water symbolized by the diagonal lines of dots and dotted circles. Swimming frogs (or toads) embellish the sides of the vase. Turtles and frogs are associated with rain and fertility in pre-Columbian and modern Maya mythology and ritual. The turtle also is symbolic of the interface between sky and water, and therefore refers to the surface of the earth. *Also see catalog 67.*

6.11 K5341

The faunal identification of this aquatic bird is uncertain because its color recalls the cormorant but it lacks the cormorant's slightly bulging beak; its long tail more closely resembles nonaquatic birds.

6.12 MS0606

The cormorant is one of the iconographic elements that defines the Holmul-style pottery. *Also see catalog 71.*

Other freshwater fish also are depicted, in particular *Petenia splendida*, a whitefish frequently found in the lakes of the Petén lowlands. These fish are recognized by their oval-shaped bodies and spotted markings on their flanks, bearing a strong resemblance to the fish painted on the interior of two bowls (MS0661 and MS1516) that may have been made in the northeastern Petén lowlands (Figure 6.9). These fishes' bodies also are marked with cross-hatching. This motif probably is a generic saurian skin symbol because it is found on the bodies of serpents, supernatural saurian creatures and fish.[12] A freshwater and lowland jungle environment is suggested by the water lily blossoms and pads surrounding the fish and by the screeching macaws (*Ara macao*) painted on the bowls' exteriors.[13]

Other aquatic animals painted on the pottery include turtles and frogs, both of which play symbolic roles associated with rain and fertility in both pre-Columbian and modern Maya mythology and ritual (cf. MS0053; Figure 6.10). The turtle is symbolic of the interface between sky and water, and therefore also of the surface of the earth. Turtles were associated closely with the rain god *Chac* and of the *bacabs*, the avatars of this deity, many of whom are depicted in Maya art wearing a turtle carapace. The turtle carapace was one of the main rhythm instruments of Classic Maya orchestras (cf. MS0245; Figure 5.32), and it may have been used frequently as part of the music accompanying the dance rituals of rain ceremonies. The loud staccato sound produced by beating a deer antler against the carapace would be replicative of, and therefore symbolic of, the sound of heavy tropical rains and thunder. This use brings to mind the other Maya deity God N, or *Pawahtun*, who frequently wears a turtle carapace as one of his main identifying features. Karl Taube makes a clear case that God N is associated closely with rain, thunder and rebirth.[14]

Frogs (and certain toads) are closely connected with *Chac* and rain. In modern *ch'a chac* ceremonies enacted to encourage *Chac* and the Catholic saints to bring the rains, four boys squat at each of the four corners of the altar of the *h'men* (a native priest among the Yucatec Maya). These boys croak like frogs in order to draw the attention of *Chac* and to help bring rain through sympathetic sound magic. Continuity of beliefs from modern times to the Classic Period is suggested by the lidded vase MS0053, whose sides are embellished with frogs swimming in water. The water is symbolized by diagonal lines of dots and dotted circles, and a turtle swims in the water on the vase's lid (Figure 6.10).

Water birds are another of the aquatic animals frequently found on the Classic Period pottery. In many instances, it is difficult to identify the species of the birds because they seem either to have generic aquatic avian features or are mixtures of the features of anhingas, egrets, cranes, cormorants and herons (cf. K5341; Figure 6.11).[15] The cormorant, however, can be identified in many different painting styles (MS0606 and MS1684; figures 6.12 and 6.13). The cormorant is recognizable by the slight bulge at the end of his beak and by the neck, head and wing positions in which the Maya artists frequently depicted this water bird. Cormorants characteristically swim and fly with their necks held out and heads angled slightly upward. In addition, these birds can be observed on land extending their wings to shake out the water prior to diving or to dry them after a fishing venture. Both of these postures characterize the cormorants' depictions on the pottery and aid in their species identification.

6.13 MS1684

The bulge at the end of the beak and the spread wings identify this aquatic bird as a cormorant. Compare the similar rendition on MS0606 with this Holmul-style vase. *Also see catalog 94.*

6.14 K4151

In their roles as expert blowgunners, the Hero Twins may be depicted here hunting water birds. Although these may be cormorants, their white feathers and exceptionally long thin beaks suggest another aquatic bird such as the heron or egret.

6.15 K2668

This vase from the upper Motagua River Valley depicts part of an unknown Classic Period myth. The two birds may be cormorants because of their dark coloration and long slightly bulging beaks. An anthropomorphic insect dances between them.

6.13

Representations of the cormorant provide an ideal example of the inappropriateness of the argument as to whether a scene is taking place in the natural or the supernatural world, or is historical or mythological. Vase MS0606 (Figure 6.12) depicts three cormorants without any other icons or symbolic elements to identify the environment. On the other hand, vase MS1684 (Figure 6.13) includes water symbols below the cormorants. Yet these are ambiguous, as is the unmarked environment of vase MS0606, because water symbols can refer either to the bird's natural habitat or to the watery underworld.

The Maya associate cormorants with supernaturals and the netherworld probably because of the bird's unusual habits and abilities. For example, cormorants traverse the various natural environments, flying through the sky, perching and nesting on the earth and swimming on and under water, at times staying submerged for minutes at a time and diving as deep as eighty feet. They ride low in the water with only their necks visible above the surface, looking not like ducks or other water birds that sit upon the water's surface but instead like dark serpents. In addition, the cormorant changes its appearance during its natural life cycle; the slick-feathered and very dark-colored bird for most of the year sprouts a prodigious crest of head feathers during the mating season. This natural mutability and

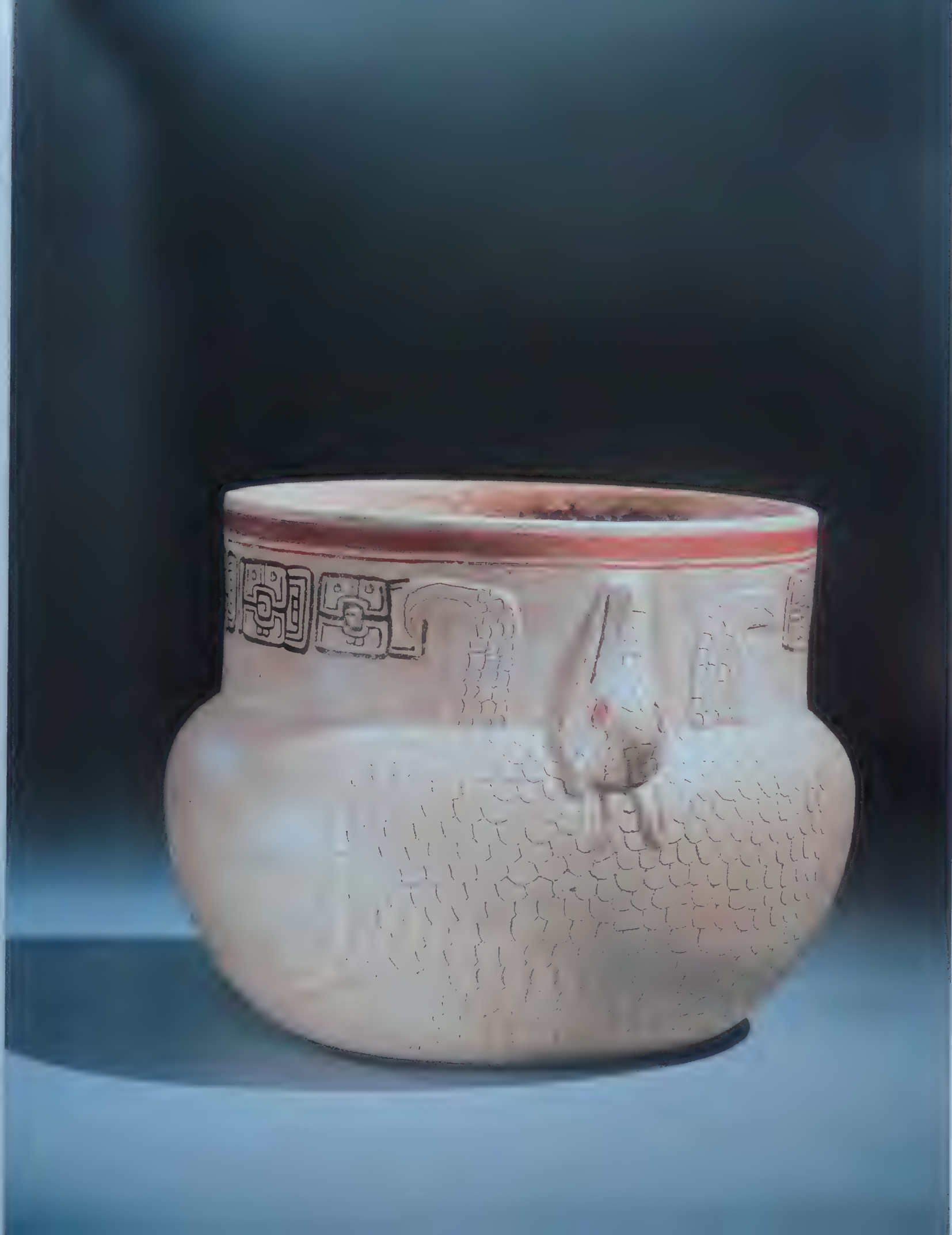
6.16 MS0118

Adult and adolescent deer decorate this plate, which may have been made in a workshop located in the modern state of Campeche, Mexico. The hole in its center is a ritual "kill hole" made by the Classic Maya perhaps to release the plate's soul prior to placing it in a tomb. (The Saint Louis Art Museum, 215:1979. Gift of Morton D. May.)

association with the netherworld through its dark coloration and submarine habits was not lost on John Milton, who wrote in his epic *Paradise Lost* that Satan "sat like a cormorant" on the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, perched ready to wreak havoc on God's realm. Given the shamanistic basis of Maya religion with its transformational beings who traverse the various realms of existence, the cormorant makes an ideal symbolic trans-formational representative from the animal kingdom.[16]

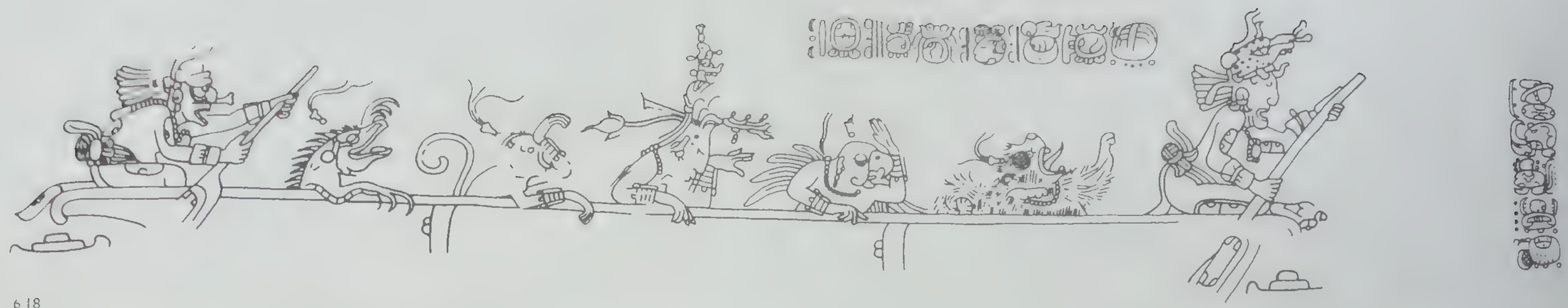
Although the cormorant does not play a role in the surviving version of the *Popol Vuh*, it may have done so in other versions. A possible concordance of the cormorant's natural habits with one part of the surviving version of the *Popol Vuh* is the catfish, the cormorant's favorite food. As discussed earlier, the Hero Twins reappeared as catfish after being killed by the Lords of the Underworld. The Twins' catfish transformation and the cormorant's preference for this particular fish may account for other scenes on the pottery that depict water birds catching catfish and the birds, in turn, being hunted by two blowgunners who may be the Hero Twins (cf. K4151; Figure 6.14). However, as mentioned above, we need not force every pictorial program into the category of *Popol Vuh* imagery. Based on many vases' pictorial programs, which bear little resemblance to any part of the surviving version of the *Popol Vuh*, cormorants and other water birds may have played important roles in other Maya myths that have not survived.[17] For example, on K2668 (Figure 6.15) one bird clutches in its beak a supernatural icon and another is held in the arms of a squatting human figure. Separating the two avians is a dancing anthropomorphic insect. There is no analog in the *Popol Vuh* for this narrative.

It is much more difficult to determine with certainty whether a particular terrestrial animal's representation



6.17

The artist combined an armadillo's shape with a globular vase, the two becoming one. Incised half circles represent the armadillo's armored body. Red paint embellishes his eyes and the rim of the vessel. The repetitious hieroglyphs are characteristic of pottery from the upper Río Motagua Valley and Baja Verapaz regions of southern Guatemala. *Also see catalog 69*



6.18

6.19

[illegible] supernatural world and [illegible] aquatic animals whose associations with the Maya underworld can more easily be proposed based on the submarine location of the underworld. In addition to their supernatural significance and use as food sustenance, terrestrial animals play important roles in colonial and modern Maya folk tales. It is assumed that these tales have pre-Columbian origins given the continuities of beliefs from pre-Hispanic times to the present. Therefore, many of the animals' depictions on the pottery probably were inspired by pre-Columbian literary sources, their depictions having symbolic overtones.

Animals who figure prominently in modern Maya folk tales include the deer (MS0118; Figure 6.16), the armadillo (MYV Q002; Figure 6.17), the rabbit, the monkey, the iguana, the toad, and many birds such as the parrot and the vulture. These animals also appear in the *Popol Vuh* and other early-sixteenth-century ethnohistoric sources. One of the most famous groupings of animals is found on the incised bones from *Hasaw Ka'an K'awil*'s tomb at Tikal. The scene depicts the soul of the deceased ruler on its canoe journey into the underworld, accompanied by a dog, a parrot, a monkey and an iguana as well as the supernatural Paddler Twins (Figure 6.18).[18] Insects such as bees, beetles, flies and mosquitos play roles in modern and pre-Columbian tales and also are depicted on the pottery (cf. K2993; Figure 6.19). Some are representative of mythological or supernatural events whereas others are more difficult to correlate with either an earthly or otherworldly scenario.[19]

The jaguar plays many roles in Maya culture, and for each role there is a specific and separate iconographic complex. Most involve symbolic and religious circumstances rather than representations of the jaguar as an animal in its natural habitat. For example, the jaguar was closely connected with elite power among the Classic Maya who wore its pelt, which also covered the regal throne. Rulers and other elite specialists took on the guise of the jaguar during transformational rituals, becoming one of the supernatural jaguars from the Maya preternatural realm (cf. MS1121; Figure 6.20).[20] This arching jaguar also is associated with human sacrificial rituals—especially decapitation, which is most closely connected with public sacrifice of war prisoners.[21] In these renderings, the jaguar holds the decapitated head of his victim or tears open his abdomen (cf. MS0663; Figure 6.21).[22] These decapitation and sacrificial jaguars usually wear a scarf around their shoulders and a water lily blossom on their head (cf. MS0739; Figure 6.44).

6.20

6.18

Drawing of one of the incised bones found in the tomb of the great Late Classic ruler of Tikal, *Hasaw Ka'an K'awil*. The ruler's soul is being borne into the underworld by the supernatural Paddler Twins and is accompanied by a screaming dog, a parrot, a spider monkey and an iguana (drawing by John Montgomery).

6.19 K2993

This Altun Ha-style vase is unusual in that it has two different pictorial programs on its opposing sites. The animals pictured here certainly relate to some pre-Columbian tale or myth. Clockwise from the top, the animals include an ant, an agouti, a quetzal bird, an arching jaguar(?), a wasp, a cormorant, a heron, an armadillo and possibly a turtle. Two snails are painted in the black background panel that covers the other half of the vase's pictorial surface.

6.20 MS1121

The "Fat Cacique," ruler of the *Ik'* polity, dances with and/or becomes an arching jaguar during a transformational dance ritual. This supernatural jaguar wears a sacrificial scarf and may be the same as that depicted on MS0739 (Figure 6.44). The "Fat Cacique" carries a fan similar to one held by the dancer on MS1678, who wears a spider monkey transformational mask (Figure 6.7). (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Landon T. Clay. Still photograph courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).

6.21 MS0663

A sacrificial jaguar holds the bleeding, decapitated head of his human victim. This image is most likely a reference to politically motivated sacrificial rites rather than to a natural jungle encounter with a jaguar. *Also see catalog 68.*

Another important interpretive dimension to the seemingly naturalistic renderings of animals on Maya pottery is that of celestial constellations. For the Maya, the sky is a map of their religion and, as with Western civilization's Greek heritage, the constellations function as a mnemonic device for religious ideology. Barbara Tedlock reports that the modern Quiché of Guatemala identify a particular constellation of stars as the image of a hawk.[23] Dennis Tedlock has identified *Vucub Caquix* as the Big Dipper. In his analysis of star lore in the Mayan dictionaries, Weldon Lamb found a number of constellations that are identified as animals, including *ac ek* ("turtle star") (in Gemini or Orion) and *tzab ek* ("snake rattle star") (the Pleiades). These seemed to have the same zoological connections in pre-Columbian times.[24] Mary Miller demonstrated continuity between these modern zodiacal references to animal imagery in the Classic Period murals in Structure 1 at Bonampak.[25] She makes a strong case for the cartouches in the upper part of Structure 1, Room 2, representing various constellations, the turtle as Gemini and the two peccaries as Orion, both animals having star signs emblazoned on their bodies.

On-going research by Bruce Love, Linda Schele and others working with the Paris Codex and Classic Period hieroglyphic data suggest the following animal-based constellations: Gemini is either a turtle, peccary or turkey; Aries is the Muan Bird; Scorpio is a scorpion; and Virgo or Leo may be a peccary. Based on images in the Paris Codex, other animals found in the night sky include the rattlesnake, the jaguar and the supernatural *xok*-fish.[26] Therefore, many of the Classic Period painted vessels' images of animals may make reference to a particular story or myth, these animals also having stellar counterparts in the Maya zodiac (cf. K1001; Figure 6.22).

6.22 K1001

The turkey and snorting peccary painted on this Codex-style vase also are emblematic of constellations in the Maya zodiac. The peccary variously has been connected with Gemini, Virgo or Leo and the turkey with Gemini. (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Landon T. Clay. Photograph courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.)

Historical Scenes

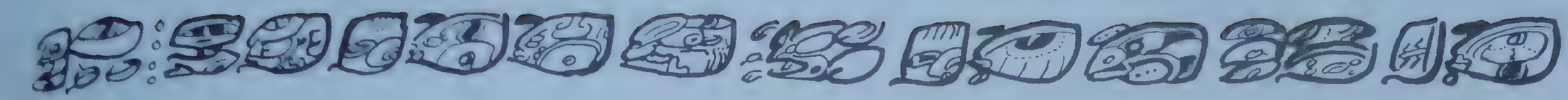
Many of the scenes painted on the pictorial pottery can be interpreted as representations of specific historical events. These range from simple depictions of a ruler seated on a throne to elaborate compositions reflecting the intricacies of elite Maya ritual. The study of these pictorial representations and their accompanying hieroglyphic texts provides new opportunities for retrieving, and hopefully understanding, the components of Maya sociopolitical history, thus amplifying the historical information gleaned from the carved stone monuments and archaeological investigations.[27] The range of historical events depicted on the Late Classic Period pottery is broad, and only a few of the more frequently rendered events are explored here for the sake of brevity. These include palace scenes, hunting excursions, the ballgame, vision quest rituals and the journey after death.

Because of the broad range of events that can be categorized as palace scenes, these are discussed as three general groups: state visits, the presentation of "commodities" (be they tribute payments, war prisoners, etc.) and ritual group meetings inside palaces. The exact nature of many of these events continues to elude us, although the ongoing decipherment of the accompanying historical glyphic texts promises to provide specific details.

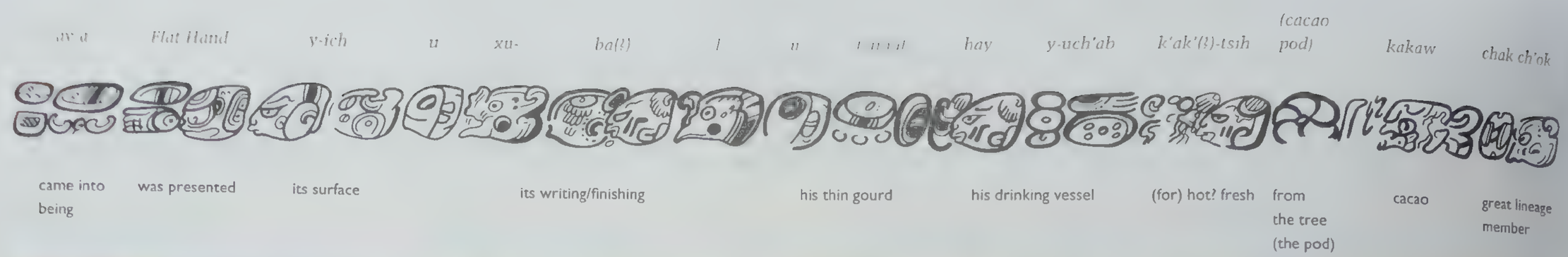
MS0054 (Figure 6.23) represents vases whose imagery records state visits. Here a dignitary has been carried on his jaguar-skin-adorned litter to the palace of a ruler. The litter's proper name is recorded by the two glyphs in front of the dignitary.[28] One of his litter bearers stands

6.23 MS0054

A visiting royal dignitary arrives at the palace of a ruler, transported on a litter whose proper name is found in front of the dignitary. One of his bearers stands behind the litter, its backrest covered with a jaguar pelt. Two attendants inside the jaguar-skin-adorned palace assist the seated ruler. A kneeling woman holds a long fan and a second person overlooks the scene from behind a pier. The rim text is a standard PSS that uses the alternative "writing/finishing" word (*u-xubal*). *Also see catalog 72.*



its surface | its | writ ng/finishing | his drinking vessel | for fresh substance (cacao)



6.24 K530

Numerous God N's are assisted by women in a ritual drinking and vision-quest ceremony. This vase stylistically is related to MS0054 (Figure 6.23). Compare their respective PSS texts, they have the same alternative substitutions of Flat Hand and *u-xubal* for the presentation and writing sections of the PSS. Also note the same fan held by the attendant woman in the upper register of seated figures.

behind him. Seated at the palace's entrance is the hosting ruler. A female attendant kneels behind him inside the building and a second individual oversees the event from behind one of the palace's piers. A short vertical text in front of the kneeling woman gives her name, and the long vertical text probably records details about the event, including the names of the lords. This must have been an important historical event because it is portrayed on at least four other vases, although the painting quality of these other vessels does not equal that of MS0054. Two are painted with the exact same scene (MS1552 and MS0304), and two others record an adjunct event in which seated men, assisted by three women, participate in a drinking ritual (MS1558; in Clarkson, 1978:#65). Interestingly, these vessels recall the stylistically similar God N supernatural drinking scene vase (K530; Figure 6.24). Perhaps this latter vase represents the supernatural counterpart of the historical event recorded on MS0054 and its related vessels.[29]

MS1118 (Figure 6.25) is one of a series of vases painted by the same master artist whose imagery records three events, at least two of which are related. These include the taking of captives by a lord named *Kan Xib Ahaw* (K2352; Figure 6.26),[30] the presentation by *Kan Xib Ahaw* of his captive(s) to a ruler whose name phrase occupies half of the PSS text on MS1118 (he is called *Ho-k'in*-bat, based on a preliminary reading of two of the nominal glyphs in his personal name phrase) (MS1118; Figure 6.25), and what is interpreted as either *Kan Xib Ahaw* paying tribute to *Ho-k'in*-bat or a sacrificial rite in which these two elites participate (K1392; Figure 6.27).[31] The patron/owner of these vessels is probably the enthroned *Ho-k'in*-bat. On MS1118 *Ho-k'in*-bat's nominal phrase includes the name of a captive he took in another

6.25 MS1118

Kan Xib Ahaw presents his bound captive to the enthroned ruler, whose name phrase occupies half of the PSS text. The regal captive kneels in front of the throne, his war prowess implied by the decapitated heads hanging from his belt. *Also see catalog 73.*

6.26

6.27

6.28

war (a lord named *Ch'a-o Ahaw*). Yet these vases record the war exploits and captive presentation by *Kan Xib Ahaw*. Possibly these three finely painted vases represent a commissioned corpus by *Kan Xib Ahaw* in commemoration of his close political ties with *Ch'a-o Ahaw*.

On two of these vases, most participants wear the spangled turban that has been associated with scribal costume. The turbans are embellished with flower blossoms and fancy cloth ties (MS1118 and K1392; figures 6.25 and 6.27).[32] Yet there is no reason to identify any of the depicted individuals as scribes or the events as scribal activities. These are not the only examples of regal figures wearing a scribal type of turban and sitting inside a palace where no scribal activities are in evidence (cf. MS0651; Figure 3.4).[33] These recurring examples suggest that the spangled turban is not just scribal apparel; it has a wider distribution and symbolic meaning in Classic Maya raiment. In all cases, the turbaned individuals' jadeite and shell jewelry identifies them as members of the Classic Maya elite (figures 6.28–6.32).

MS0445 is an exceptional example of the master artist's carefully constructed view of a historical event (Figure 6.33). Through the use of overlapping figures and the placement of architectural piers, the artist ensured

6.26 K2352

Lord *Kan Xib Ahaw* takes captives in battle. The victorious warriors are identified by their short-sleeved shirts, three of which are made from jaguar pelts. Perhaps these jaguar tops are a type of body protection stuffed with cotton or reinforced in some other manner, similar to the effective armor worn by the later Aztecs and adopted by the invading Spanish in the sixteenth century.

6.27 K1392

Kan Xib Ahaw and Lord *Ho-k'in*-bat flank a woven basket that may hold bloodletting implements. This scene also has been interpreted as depicting a tribute payment. The hieroglyphic texts name the participants and the captive taken in an earlier battle by Lord *Ho-k'in*-bat.

6.28

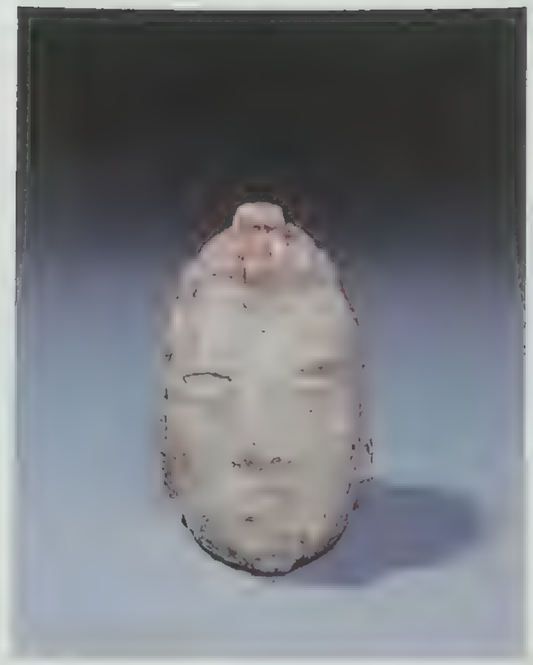
These two jadeite earflares are the central part of the elaborate ear ornaments worn by the Maya elite. To hold the earflares in place, counterweights in the form of jadeite beads and hollow tubes were strung through the center of each earflare (photograph by Los Angeles County Museum of Art) *Also see catalog 74.*

6.29

These carved shells were inlaid into the center of jadeite earflares. The image is a kneeling captive whose hands are bound at the wrist. Their elite status is indicated by their earflares and elaborate belt assemblage, which includes a head with pendant jadeite plaques like those seen in Figure 6.32. *Also see catalog 77a*

6.29

6.30



6.31

6.32

that the scene would be understood as a composite image of two events, one of which involved a meeting between two men in a relatively private small room, and the other of which was held in a more open palace room among these same two men plus two others. The two men inside the small room converse together, one holding a cylinder vase. Short texts above them give their names and/or titles. These men then move to the more visible space, the man from the right side of the small room taking his place on the throne. His companion now sits to his right on the floor. Note their similar body paint, jewelry and designs on their clothing; they are the same two men. The master painter signed this vase. His signature's location behind the throne may imply a familial relationship with the man on the dais.

Two men flank the enthroned lord. One sits on the floor facing the ruler and the other kneels behind him. Their status or ritual role is indicated by their lack of body paint. The figure seated on the left wears a spangled turban, which might signal his identification as a scribe. However, his physical distance from the scribal signature and the presence of a different nominal phrase in front of him suggest otherwise. As noted above, the spangled turban seems to have been more than a scribe's headpiece.

MS0445 is painted with a PSS text that includes the name of the vase's owner and his artisan and ballplayer titles. The PSS ends with a parentage statement, noting that the owner/patron is the son of a man from the *Ik'* emblem glyph polity. As discussed in Chapter 5, this vase's chemical profile is unusual for *Ik'* pottery because of its high calcium content, yet its overall chemistry is broadly similar to those vessels attributable to the *Ik'* region (cf. figures 5.2–5.10). The long vertical text in front of the enthroned lord records historical information concerning the depicted event, including the fact

6.30

[illegible]

6.31

[illegible] wears a headband tied at [illegible] and embellished with [illegible] He also wears earflares [illegible] flowers. Red pigment [illegible] in the alabaster to highlight the headdress and jewelry. photograph by Butch [illegible] catalog 76

6.32

These three jadeite belt plaques were part of an elaborate royal belt assemblage that included a jadeite and shell anthropomorphic mosaic mask. The plaques, mosaic mask and ear pendant were part of the royal jewels excavated from an elite tomb at Cahal Pech, Belize. [illegible] catalog 77

6.33 [illegible]

The artist used architectural features and the PSS text to construct a two-stage scene taking place inside a palacelike structure. The [illegible] seated on the throne is identified in the PSS text as the son of a ruler of the *Ik'* polity. *Also see catalog* [illegible]

6.34 MS1406

A historical event takes place on the broad stairway leading to a palacelike building on top. Prisoners taken in battle are being presented to the *ahaw* wearing the cape and seated on the throne. A visiting dignitary was transported to the event carried in a litter decorated with jaguar skins. He also sits upon a ceremonial bench below which are a plate filled with solid food resembling *noh wah* (or tamales) and a small lidded cylinder vase. (From the collection of The Art Museum, Princeton University. Gift of Mary O'Boyle English in honor of Woodruff J. English and the Class of 1931.)

that the protagonist participated in a dance ritual. Perhaps the curious zoomorphic head sitting on the shelf behind the dais is his dance mask; other appropriate gear may be found in the black container below the mask. Note the lidded cylinder vase and a ballgame yoke sitting in front of the black container; the yoke's presence is consonant with the ballplayer title in the PSS.

Mayanists refer to the architectural space in which these two events take place as a "palace." This term is applied loosely to all multiroomed and usually single-storied range-type structures found in the center of Maya cities. These galleried structures certainly had different functions. Some were residences of the site's ruler and his immediate family. Others were dedicated to administrative and religious activities. This building type recalls those atop Structure A-5 at Altun Ha, which David Pendergast interprets as designed for ceremonial use and whose form and architectural features (such as curtain-holders) afforded privacy for the building's users.[34] These buildings closely resemble the one depicted on Piedras Negras Lintel 3, whose scene records a similar "palace" gathering of fifteen dignitaries (Figure 3.22).

Other palace scenes record such political events as tribute payments and the presentation and sacrifice of prisoners taken in battle. A particularly complex representative of the latter category is MS1406 (Figure 6.34). Here the primary lord is seated on a white throne and leans against a large white pillow. The throne is located atop three tall steps leading up to the palace room, whose entrance curtains are tied above him. A visiting dignitary has been brought to the event in a litter, one of his bearers and the litter itself resting on the lowest

6.35 MS1523

A ritual deer hunt adorns this wide plate. Four hunters and three black (carrion?) birds surround three deer. Two hunters carry their prey and another blows a conch-shell trumpet. The hunters transport their gear in net bags. *Also see catalog 79.*

6.36 MS1526

A ruler of the *Ik'* polity named *Sac-Muan* plays a ballgame as part of the rituals of his becoming a "great lineage member," as recorded in the vertical text that divides the scene (*u-bah ta tsih chak ch'ok kelem Sac Muan* [*Ik'* emblem glyph]). He may be the standing figure on the right because he wears a bird headdress that may identify the "winners" of a game (see note 37 in this chapter). (Dallas Museum of Art. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Nasher.) *Also see catalog 80.*

step. Warriors stand on this step and also flank the enthroned *ahaw*. One of their tall staffs is hafted with a long black obsidian point. Two hapless prisoners cower below the enthroned lord and are identified as captives by the *u-chan* ("his captive") glyphs in the short vertical texts in front of them. They probably are destined for sacrifice, which is indicated by the white paper or cloth strips laced through their earlobes. This vase is stylistically and chemically related to the *Ik'* polity ceramic corpus and follows its tradition of historical narrative on the painted pottery.

Other kinds of historical events that did not take place inside palaces and ritual buildings are also recorded on the pottery. These include a deer hunt, which may be both sport and ritual (cf. MS1523; Figure 6.35). Four hunters surround a deer painted in the center of the plate. Two of the participants carry net bags and blow conch shell trumpets. The other two hunters carry their captured prey. The white scroll-like motifs on the deer's flanks may indicate the wounds inflicted on the deer by the hunters' spears.

The ballgame was an important sport and ritual event among the Classic Maya and is a frequent subject in Maya art (figures 6.36–6.39).[35] The game was played both as sport and as part of elaborate politically charged rituals. On the symbolic level, the game is a reenactment of the creation of the cosmos by the gods, and the ballcourt is the symbolic place of origin and emergence from the supernatural realm into the world of humanity. The

637 [illegible]

[illegible] game may be depicted [illegible] The short glyphic texts seat [illegible] the players and their commen- [illegible] are connected at lines connecting [illegible] each participant. | The Saint [illegible] Museum, 216 1979. Gift of Morton [illegible]

6.38 MS0554

A hefty ballplayer kneels as he prepares to hit the ball with his upraised elbow. The game's sacrificial component is implied by the three knots atop his triangular headpiece and the strips of white paper or cloth pulled through his pierced earlobe. (Mint Museum of Art. Charlotte, North Carolina. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Francis Robicsek.)

6.39

This whistle is molded in the form of a ballplayer dressed in the typical protective gear. Note his fancy knee pads and the wide yoke with which he strikes the solid rubber ball. His large deer headdress typically is worn by ballplayers and may designate those who will be sacrificed at the completion of the event (see note 37 in this chapter). *Also see catalog 81.*

ruler opens this supernatural portal by sacrificing one of the players at the completion of the "game," symbolically remaking the world. These suprahuman abilities established a like-in-kind relationship between the players and the omnipotent deities, which was the foundation of their supernatural power.

[illegible] depicts a game played by four players, two per team (Figure [illegible]). The rim text is a standard version of the PSS, whose various substitutions recall the texts from the *Ik'* ceramic corpus, including the "writing bat" version of *u-ts'ib*. The vertical text functions both as a formal device to indicate the beginning/ending point of the scene and to convey historical information, stating *u-bah ta tsih chak ch'ok kelem Sac-Muan* [*Ik'* emblem glyph] ("he becomes the new great lineage member. . . . *Sac-Muan*, holy lord of the *Ik'* polity"). Given the symbolic role for the ballgame and its intimate connection with the power base for Maya rulership, it would be appropriate for *Sac-Muan* to play a ballgame when lineage membership was bestowed upon him.[37]

A less politically charged ballgame may be rendered on MS0114 (Figure 6.37). Here the participants seem to be making vociferous commentary on the game itself. Their speech is suggested by the lines connecting each person to a small glyphic text. While these contain some known syllables, most remain undeciphered. The figure leaning over the ball may be saying *hubul* ("it is fallen") Cholan[38] probably in reference to the ball depicted below him. Other players use the term *lah* ("hit"), probably referring to their hitting the ball during the game.

When the painted imagery moves into the realm of religion and its associated rituals, the visual and epigraphic distinction between historical and supernatural images—between history and myth—becomes much less clear. This blurring of the boundary between the two reflects the Mayas' belief that history and myth are not separate entities as they are in the Western world, but instead they simply are part of the same phenomenon of human-deity existence. Further, for the modern and pre-Columbian Maya, history reenacts mythology. Many vessels that record vision-quest and religious rituals, then, should not be categorized as representing either a historical event or a mythological belief; and the depicted event should not be identified as taking place in the human or numinous realm because of their overlapping and synchronous nature.

6.40 MS0071

The hieroglyphic texts create the roof line and the supporting pier of a palacelike building. The text records a sacrificial rite on the part of the enthroned *ahaw*, who is from the Tikal lineage.

6.41 MS0075

A vision-quest rite is depicted. The human participant dances in the center of the scene. He is flanked by two supernaturals who sit on a scorpion's tail and a stack of three stones, both of which represent important mythological locations also symbolized by certain constellations along the Milky Way. All wear blood-splattered cloth and the red sacrificial scarf around their shoulders. The dancing figure's full head mask is a specific skeletal zoomorph associated with this sacrificial rite and is found on K2942 and MS0160 (figures 6.42 and 6.43). This may be a re-enactment of the original sacrifice by First Father at the beginning of Creation. *Also see catalog 84.*

6.41

6.42 K2942

The same sacrificial dance rite painted on MS0075 is reproduced on this vase. The sacrifice is self-decapitation, and the supernatural present during the ritual is the arching water lily jaguar here surrounded by flames. Note the similar costumes worn by the dancers on K2942 and MS0075 (figures 6.41 and 6.42).

6.43 MS0160

The icon painted diagonally on this vase is the same skeletal zoomorph headdress worn by the dancers on MS0075 and K2942 (figures 6.41 and 6.42). The zoomorph is embellished with white strips covered with spots of sacrificial blood. The red background also makes reference to the sacrificial association of the imagery. *Also see catalog 85.*

MS0071 records a self-sacrificial event that appears to take place in the human realm inside a palace (Figure 6.40). The architectural space includes a dais with a throne and swag curtains tied along the ceiling. The PSS text creates the roof line. A long vertical text is confined within a pair of vertical lines and functions as the pier of the galleried building. This text records the main event as a sacrificial rite completed by an *ahaw* from Tikal.[38] The other regal participants are depicted surrounding the throne and are named in the short texts painted next to each figure. Although the scene takes place during Classic Period times, the vertical text opens with the date of the beginning of Maya time and thus intentionally blurs the boundary between human and mythological events.

MS0075 (Figure 6.41) records a vision-quest rite whose goals include the entering of supernatural space and interaction with the deities to ensure the continuity of life. This quest recreates the original vision of the gods that created the cosmos.[39] On MS0075, two seated figures flank a dancing person. All wear blood-splattered clothing and the scarf of autosacrifice is tied around their shoulders. The flanking figures may be supernatural, suggested by the jaguar ears above their earflares.[40] The supernatural on the left is seated on a [illegible] supported by two smaller stones. Together, these three stones may refer to the celestial and supernatural location called the "Three Stone Place," where the gods separated the sky from the earth when they created the world. The figure on the right is seated upon a scorpion tail, which too may be referring to a celestial location in this case the Maya constellation of the scorpion.

The central dancing figure wears a full head mask of a skeletal long-nosed zoomorph, the lower part of his own fleshed face visible inside the creature's open [illegible]. Although we do not know the name of this [illegible], his head frequently comprises the headdress worn by

Personage 6

6.44 MS0739

The images painted on this wide dish comprise one of the most detailed accounts of the sacrificial and shamanic transformational rites central to Classic Maya religion. Each of the figures represents a transformed co-essence who is named in the accompanying short hieroglyphic texts. Persons 3 and 6 closely resemble the dancing figures on MS0075 and K2942 (figures 6.41 and 6.42). (Collection of the Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquín, Guatemala.) *Also see catalog 86.*

participants in blood sacrifice scenes (cf. K2942; Figure 6.42) and also is found as the main icon on other vases (MS0160; Figure 6.43). On MS0160, the zoomorph is marked with bloody spots and floats in a sanguine field presumably representing sacrificial blood. The dancing figure on MS0075 wears a red sacrificial scarf around his shoulders and an elaborate loincloth with a bulbous tie splattered with blood. This costume and sacrificial dance is found on other pottery vessels and elsewhere in Maya art, such as in the famous murals at Bonampak.[41] Bird wings are attached to the dancer's arms, implying his "flight" to the supernatural realm during the vision-quest ritual. On MS0075, then, the flanking figures place the depicted event in celestial and supernatural space. The dancing human has "flown" into the celestial numinous realm of the gods through his autosacrifice and dance.[42]

MS0739 (Figure 6.44) is one of the most detailed depictions of blood sacrifice and vision-quest rituals, featuring representations of the supernatural "co-essences" into which humans are transformed during these rites. This co-essence is called *way* in Mayan languages and is known by its Aztec word *nahual* in the literature on Mexican shamanism.[43] The co-essence images on MS0739 are quintessential expressions of this concept and probably do not pertain to mortuary underworld rituals but rather to "historical" numinous events.[44] Three-dimensional representations of these shamanic transformations are found in the Classic Period figurine corpus, for example the dwarf whose backside is sculpted with his animal co-essence (Figure 6.45). Each person painted on MS0739 represents a

co-essence whose name is found in the contiguous vertical texts. Their grammatical structure is [name] *u-way k'ul ahaw* [name or *ix-tan*]; ("[name of the supernatural] the nagual of [human nominal]"). The probable human nominals include such glyphs as "*k'ul ahaw* of [polity]" ("holy lord of [polity name]"), or *ix-tan*, whose meaning is unclear.[45]

Of particular iconographic interest on MS0739 are personages 3 and 6, whose costume and pose are equivalent to the dancing figures on MS0075 and K2942 (figures 6.41 and 6.42).[46] Both carry on their backs rectangular objects that may be the seats upon which perch personages 1 and 4. When opened, the seats' back supports can be recognized as human femurs. Personage 4 is the arching jaguar *ak-ol balam*, in whose guise (or with whom) dances the Fat Cacique on MS1121 (Figure 6.20). Personage 8's jaguar costume, including his jaguar mittens, recalls the "Fat Cacique's" costume on MS1121 and the burial clothing of the young lord from the tomb at Buenavista, which yielded the Buenavista Vase (see Chapter 7).[47]

Given that some of these painted vessels were created as funerary wares, it is not surprising that some are painted with images of the soul's journey after death (cf. MS0740; Figure 6.46). Part of the mythological model for this journey is the story of the Hero Twins from the *Popol Vuh*, who defeated the lords of the underworld (called *Xibalba*) and thus opened the door for the soul's resurrection and apotheosis out of *Xibalba*. Although recorded in the *Popol Vuh*, the journey into the underworld also survives in Classic Period art and hieroglyphic inscriptions such as those on the famous incised bones from *Hasaw Ka'an K'awil*'s tomb at Tikal (Figure 6.18). The images incised on these bones depict *Hasaw Ka'an K'awil* sitting in a canoe and being borne into the

6.45 K5338

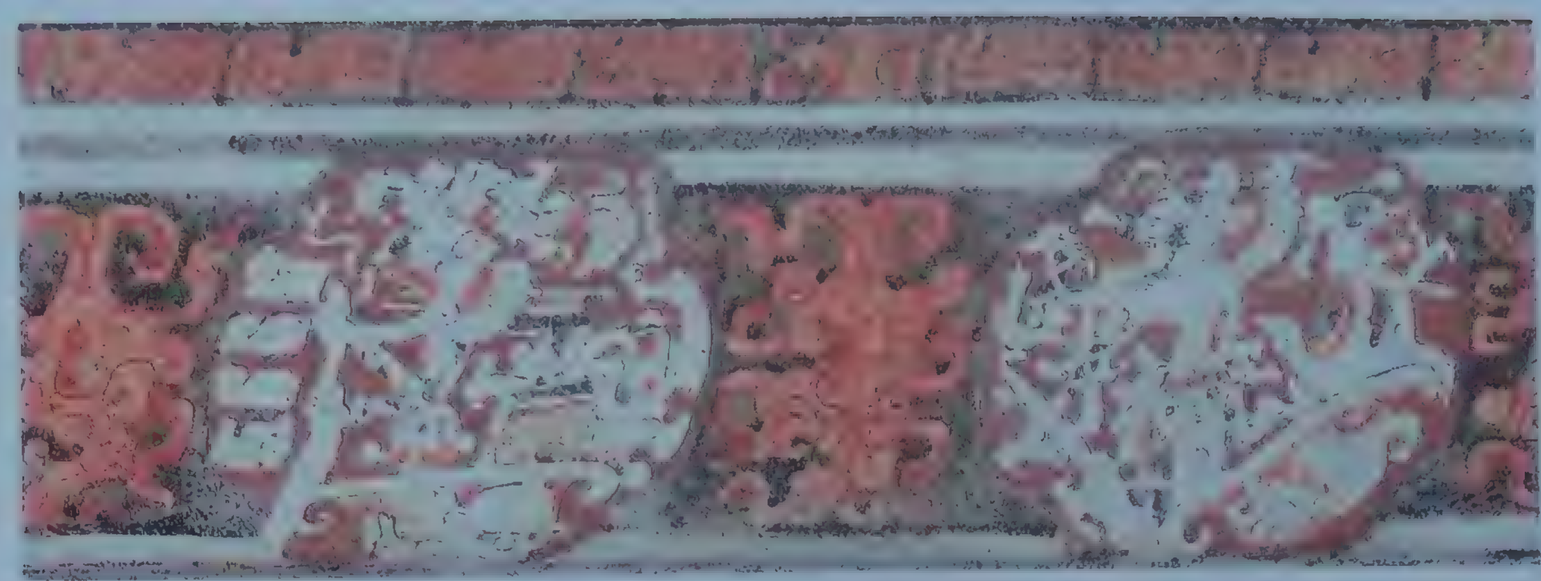
This figurine renders in three dimensions the shamanic transformation by a Maya dwarf. The back of the figure is sculpted with his *way*, or animal co-essence. (The Art Museum, Princeton University, L.1988.147; loan by Gillett G. Griffin).
Also see catalog 87.

6.46 MS0740

The main image on this vase recounts the soul's journey into the underworld after death. The deceased is taken to the numinous realm in a canoe by the supernatural Paddler Twins, who sit at the bow and stern. The soul's resurrection as the Maize God is symbolized by the two nude females dressing the deceased in the guise of this deity. (Collection of the Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquín, Guatemala.)
Also see catalog 82.

underworld by the supernatural Paddler Twins. The verb describing this event is an ideograph whose mainsign is a wooden canoe like the one in which *Hasaw Ka'an K'awil* sits.[48] The image on MS0740 mirrors this scene, with the deceased lord sitting in the center of the canoe and flanked by the Paddler Twins. Below the canoe is a reclining figure "kissing" a fish, both of whom tumble out of the open maw of a supernatural saurian. This may be a reference to the famous scene in the *Popol Vuh* in which the Hero Twins reappear as catfish in the river of *Xibalba* after having been sacrificed by the Lords of the Underworld.

The yearly resurrection of the maize plant in the milpa is used by the Classic Maya as the metaphor for the resurrection of the human soul. This theme is embedded in the *Popol Vuh* in the Hero Twins' quest to retrieve the head of their father, who had been sacrificed by the underworld lords. In retrieving the head of *Hun-Hunahpu*, who appears in Classic Maya art as the Maize God, the Twins bring him back to life,[49] much like the idea of the resurrection of the human soul. On MS0740, this mythic complex is found in the second scene. Two women dress the "soul" of the deceased person in the guise of the Maize God in preparation for his resurrection and apotheosis.[50] The vertical text may comment on the scene, but unfortunately most of the glyphs are eroded—with the exception of the final glyph, the *chac-ahaw*-Tikal emblem glyph ("great Tikal lord"). This nominal suggests that the person depicted on the vase, and presumably its owner/patron, was a member of the Tikal ruling lineage. Interestingly, however, the vase's chemical profile points to its having been produced in the eastern Petén region, chemically matching potsherds excavated at Holmul and from sites in the immediate vicinity. The name of a Tikal dynastic member on the vase may imply Tikal patronage in the region or production for ritual gifting to a Tikal elite person. The lack of archaeological provenience for MS0740 is especially frustrating given the intriguing possibilities of sociopolitical information surrounding the function of this vase. The



iconographic program on MS0740, then, combines both the soul's journey into the underworld and its eventual resurrection and apotheosis as the Maize God. Although these two parts of the death journey frequently are found separately on Maya pottery, rarely do they appear together on the same vase.[51]

MS0158 (Figure 6.47) is painted with two large quatrefoil-shaped cartouches that probably represent a cave opening, which the Maya believed was the entrance into the underworld.[52] Inside each of these two cartouches, one of the Paddler Twins stands in a small canoe, paddle in hand, guiding the boat into *Xibalba*. The Jaguar Paddler has a dog (with a water lily flower on his head) as his companion sitting in the rear of the canoe. The other Paddler is probably the Stingray Paddler, although this cartouche is eroded and many iconographic details have been lost. The vertical glyphic text in front of this Paddler probably names him, although the glyphs are too eroded to discern any details. Between these two cartouches is a large, skeletal zoomorphic head icon. Although unidentifiable at this time, this icon also is painted on the two canoes. Chemically and stylistically, this vase recalls vessels from the Naranjo Area Group, in particular MS0199, MS0200 and MS0808 (Figure 6.48; also see Chapter 5, figures 5.45 and 5.46). All share the same idiosyncratic way of depicting the Paddler Twins.

6.47 MS0158

The large red quatrefoils represent the maw of the earth (a cave), which is the entrance to the underworld. One of the Paddler Twins stands in his canoe; his companion dog sits in the stern. The downward angle to the canoe implies its impending voyage into the river of *Xibalba*. *Also see catalog 83.*

Supernatural Beings and Events

The third category in this study is images of supernaturals or deities and depictions of supernatural events. This broad grouping of interrelated imagery includes those vessels that illustrate particular parts of the Quiché Maya epic tale of Creation, the *Popol Vuh*, which preserves the religious mythological basis for apotheosis and resurrection after death. Michael Coe's ground-breaking research made the first connection between this epic literary source and the imagery

6.48 MS0808

This vase is related stylistically, iconographically and chemically to MS0158. It also depicts one of the Paddler Twins and demonstrates the artistic creativity and stylistic variability of ceramic production during the Classic Period in the eastern Petén lowlands of Guatemala. (Collection of the Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquín, Guatemala.)

painted on Classic Period pottery.[53] There is no doubt that many of the painted pots served a primary function as funerary goods, and it is appropriate for these vessels to display pictorial representations of the *Popol Vuh*.

Two of the best known of these *Popol Vuh* vases are MS0827 and MS1392 (figures 6.49 and 6.50). MS0827 illustrates a seminal event in the *Popol Vuh:* when the decapitated head of the Hero Twins' father was placed in a tree by the Lords of the Underworld. The magical head comes to life and impregnates a daughter of one of the lords, who later gives birth to the Hero Twins. The scene on MS1392 is the culmination of the Hero Twins' trials in the underworld and their defeat of the lords of death (Figure 6.50). Here *Hunahpu* pulls God N from his shell and raises his sacrificial knife blade to dispatch God N who, along with the other lords of *Xibalba*, requested that the Twins sacrifice him and return him to life (as the Twins had done with various animals and with each other).[54] Of course, the Twins did not return the lords to life and thus established for humanity the ability to triumph over death through resurrection. As the Hero Twins escaped from *Xibalba* and ascended into the sky to become the sun and the moon, so too could the souls of humans survive the trials of the underworld and join the deified ancestors (and the original Four Hundred Boys killed by *Zipacná*, as recounted in the *Popol Vuh*), taking residence among the stars (the Four Hundred Boys) of the Milky Way.[55]

MS1136 is another scene from the *Popol Vuh* (Figure 6.51). Here the dreaded *Camazotz'* raises his wings menacingly at the Hero Twins, who crouch in the side panels of the plate. The watery nature of the underworld is evoked by the symbolic water bands and curls that separate the Twins. It is *Camazotz'* who finally defeats the Twins after they had triumphed over numerous trials through their cleverness and trickery. One of the trials was to spend a night in the House of Darkness, which was inhabited by vampire bats. To escape them, the Hero Twins crouched inside their blowguns. *Hunahpu's* end came when he stuck his head out the end of his blowgun to see if morning had arrived, only to have his head bitten off by *Camazotz'*.

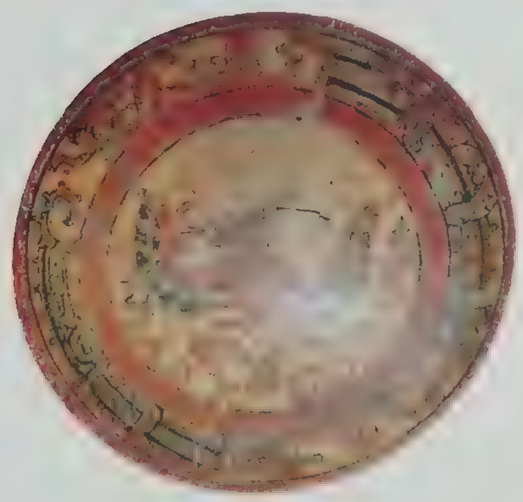
MS1126 is one of the most unusual vases in the corpus of Late Classic polychrome pottery, notable for its

6.49 MS0827

The decapitated head of *Hun Hunaphu*, the father of the Hero Twins, comes to life in the gourd tree where it was placed by the Lords of the Underworld who defeated him in a ballgame and later cut off his head. The gourd tree frames an individual seated on a dais who converses with a waterbird. This vase is related to pottery from the upper Motagua River Valley. (Collection of the Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquin, Guatemala.)

6.50 MS1392

This Chamá-style vase narrates the Hero Twins' final magical trick. They grant the wishes of the underworld lords to be sacrificed and then brought back to life. The Twins granted the sacrifice but failed to follow through on the resurrection. Here God N is pulled from his shell by *Hun Ahpu*. *Also see catalog 90*



6.51 MS1136

The Hero Twins crouch along the sides of this plate and surround *Camazotz'*, the killer bat of the underworld. The watery nature of the netherworld is symbolized by the water bands and curls that separate the Twins.

yellow-orange background, ornate hieroglyphs and pictorial details (figures 6.52 and 1.9).[59] The vase depicts the meeting of God D (*Itzamná*, whose Classic Period name may be *Itzam Ye* or *Itzamhul*) and the Hero Twins. This is one of the rare depictions of a meeting between the Hero Twins and *Itzamna*. However, if Karl Taube is correct that the Celestial Bird *Vucub Caquix* is the *way* of God D—and given other vessels pictorial renderings of the Twins with *Vucub Caquix*—this particular iconographic program may be more prevalent than previously realized.

The vase's PSS text states that it was made to contain tree-fresh cacao, and its owners are listed as the Hero Twins, here called *Yax Balam* and *Hun Ahaw*.[60] The text ends with a nominal that Robicsek and Hales believe to be the name of the grandfather of the great Tikal ruler *Hasaw Ka'an K'awil*, although other evidence supports an alternative interpretation of these final two glyphs as titles.[61] The artist of MS1126 created architectural space with the rim PSS and shorter, vertical versions thereof between the Hero Twins and God D. These two short PSS phrases seem to record the unveiling of the maize and "pure, royal skull" offerings placed in front of God D.

MS1404 is the finest example of Codex-style pottery painting currently known (Figure 6.53). This vase has been discussed at length elsewhere and these outstanding commentaries need no additions.[62] MS1404 is important to the study of Maya mythology because it provides a window into portions of the *Popol Vuh* that have not survived. The vase's main scene takes place inside God L's palace in the underworld. He is accompanied by five young women, each of whom is named by the glyphs next to them.[63] One young lady ties a jadeite bracelet onto another's wrist while two others converse and a fourth pours liquid from one cylinder vase into another. This scene finds no counterpart in the surviving epic

tale. God L's spoken commentary is recorded in the double column of glyphs in front of him; unfortunately these are too effaced to read. The second scene on this vase has been interpreted as either the sacrifice in *Xibalba* of *Vucub Hunahpu*, the father of the Hero Twins, or one of the final episodes when the Hero Twins sacrifice a "human" in order to convince the Lords of the Underworld to be sacrificed themselves.[64] Unfortunately, the short glyphic text above the sacrificers provides no clues as to their identity.

Many of the supernatural scenes painted on the pictorial pottery are not readily identifiable as *Popol Vuh* events. These images must derive from other myths or versions of this epic tale, from other parts of the Maya realm, that have not survived. Classic Maya culture was

as multifaceted as any of the world's great civilizations, and we should not expect to find only one mythology or a single version of its tales. Similar to the Christian Bible and the early histories and myths upon which it is based, the sixteenth-century *Popol Vuh* resulted from a long history of development and certainly had many versions that have not survived as a written text. Just as we do not use the Bible as the only literary source for interpreting fourteenth- through eighteenth-century European painting, so too we cannot use the *Popul Vuh* as the sole source for understanding Classic Maya mythological imagery.

A host of supernaturals are rendered on the pictorial pottery. These beings are deities, numinous characters and unworldly creatures, many of whose identities and glyphic names continue to elude us and will engage our attention for years to come. For the sake of brevity, only a few of these characters are presented here.[65] MS0240 is painted with the image of a feathered fish (Figure 6.54). His body is marked with motifs that usually identify boa constrictors (see the snakeskin pants worn by one of the dancers on the Altar de Sacrificios Vase, for example). However, these markings also are found on vision serpents whose heads more closely resemble lizards and other reptilians, including the *Crocodylia* order. However, the creature on MS0240 has a fish barbel, and the volutes at the end of his body recall fish fins.[66] Therefore, this creature is a composite of bird's feathers and a fish whose body is covered with generic saurian markings. Although other appearances of this feathered fish are rare in Classic Period art, it is found on at least two other vessels (K3717 in the Kerr Photographic Archive and a plate in the collection of the Utah Museum of

6.52 MS1126

God D (or *Itzamná*, whose Classic Period name may be *Itzam Ye* or *Itzamhi*) meets the Hero Twins inside a palacelike structure. The vase's elaborate head variant hieroglyphs painted in such a large format highlight this painter's calligraphic artistry. *Also see catalog 88.*

6.53

6.53 MS1404

This magnificent Codex-style vase is the epitome of Classic Period fine line painting. Its imagery records portions of the *Popol Vuh* that have not survived in the written sixteenth-century version. God L sits inside his palace in the underworld and five lovely young women keep him company. A rabbit sits just outside God L's palace and paints in a codex. This scene finds no counterpart in the epic tale. God L's spoken commentary is recorded in the eroded double column of glyphs in front of him. The second scene may be the sacrifice in *Xibalba* of the father of the Hero Twins. (The Art Museum, Princeton University, gift of the Hans and Dorothy Widenmann Foundation). *Also see catalog 89.*

Fine Arts, University of Utah, Salt Lake City).[67] The exact identity of this feathered fish remains unknown, although iconographic elements on the Utah plate and vase K3717 imply that it lived in a watery realm.

A similar creature, but one that is certainly a feathered serpent or saurian rather than a feathered fish, is portrayed on two vessels that come from the same region as the Naranjo Area Group vessels (MS1158 and MS0161; figures 6.55 and 6.56). The creatures painted on these vases recall the arching feathered saurian on Tikal Temple IV Lintel 3, who is the Vision Serpent conjured during self-sacrificial rites. It is highly probable that those painted on MS1158 and MS0161 also are vision serpents.[68]

MS0249 (Figure 6.57) is an unusually thin-walled lidded bowl. The lid's knob is sculpted in the form of a kneeling humanoid who wears a thickly wrapped hip cloth that reaches below his knees.[69] This figure may be God A-prime, whose most characteristic feature is a black horizontal band across his eyes.[70] Arguing against this interpretation, however, is the figure's red-painted face (God A-prime's face is normally starkly white) and the lack of any of the other iconographic elements that define this deity (for example, self-decapitation and violent sacrifice, disembodied eyes and blood-splattered collar). It is more likely that this character may be related to the spotted Ahaw Headband Twin (Karl Taube's God S), the crest on his head recalling the Early Classic renditions of this supernatural. On this vase, however, he lacks the typical black "death" spots on his body and the black curl at the corner of his mouth.[71] The spotted Ahaw Headband Twin is associated with sacrifice, death and the underworld in both the post-Classic and Classic Periods. These associations are not readily apparent on this vase, although the remainder of its imagery is comprised exclusively of a PSS with long nominal phrase. The vase shows no wear patterns, the lack of which suggests a funerary function. It would be appropriate for its imagery to have death and underworld connotations. The vase probably was made in the Alta Verapaz region of Guatemala and therefore may represent a highland manifestation of this deity, whose other representations to date, are only known from the lowlands.

6.54 MS0240

A feathered fish undulates on the face of this plate. His body is marked with boa constrictor motifs that also are found on Vision Serpents and other lizards and reptilians However, this creature clearly has a fish barbel, and the volutes at the end of his body recall fish fins. Therefore, he is a composite of a bird and a fish with saurian markings.

Also see catalog 92

6.55 MS1158

This vase from the general Naranjo region depicts another feathered saurian. He resembles very closely the Vision Serpent rendered on Tikal Temple IV Lintel 3. (Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina. Gift of Mr. Andrew A. Lanyi.)

6.56 MS0161

The artist fills the main panel on this vase with the looped body of the Vision Serpent. The background was filled in with daubs of color that probably were originally green and now faded to gray. The variations in the saturation of the background paint and the fact that it doesn't fill all the space between the red-painted imagery create an active visual field.

MS0060 is an excellent example of the many scenes and supernatural characters depicted on the pottery whose identities and interpretations remain problematic, many of which narrate pre-Columbian mythology outside that found in the *Popol Vuh* and other sixteenth-century survivals (Figure 6.58). On MS0060, eight supernaturals are arranged in two rows of four each. The upper row begins with a dancing skeletal figure holding a burning torch. Sacrificial paper strips are threaded through his earlobes. He is followed by an old god who wears a fringed hip cloth and carries an icon at his back. An anthropomorphic dog is next. He has a cut shell on his head and a flower at the end of his tail. The last figure in the top register may be a ballplayer (identified by the wide "belt" around his waist, which recalls the typical yoke worn by players). Perched atop his head is a deer-head headdress, and he blows a conch shell. Following the last character, a cormorant stands with open mouth and extended wing tips.

The lower register begins with a kneeling "trumpet"-mouthed supernatural wearing the sacrificial scarf referring to his disembowelment. Behind him is a person seated cross-legged who has completed the self-decapitation sacrificial rite. He holds a round stone knife in his left hand and a hafted laurel-leaf-shaped knife in his right hand. His decapitated head is set atop his shoulders peering upwards. The third figure in the lower register reclines and smokes a cigar. His open chest cavity indicates he has undergone heart sacrifice. He floats above an altar marked with the crossed femurs icon associated with sacrifice and the underworld (cf. MS0739; Figure 6.44). The last figure is an anthropomorphic deer with water lilies emerging from his mouth. A tiny fish swims in front of his snout. He sports a square "shield" on his chest, with disembodied eyes at its four corners. The short hieroglyphic texts name the participants, although these border on pseudoglyphs and none has been adequately deciphered. Therefore, they cannot assist with an interpretation of the scene. Even though the exact myth has been lost, these figures tell a tale of supernatural sacrifice in the watery realm of the underworld.

The vase's main text is a standard Cholan PSS, opening with the deity-head variant of Initial Sign, followed by the God N head (*huy-i*, "was blessed"). *U-*"writing bat (*xubal?*)"*-nahal* is next in the sequence. Although this combination represents a unique construction in the Late Classic PSS corpus, the "writing bat" (*xubal*) followed by a *-ba-nahal* suffix is found on *Ik'* polity vessels and those attributable to the east-west corridor between the *Ik'* polity and Naranjo. The chemical profile of this vessel resembles potsherds from Naranjo and Uaxactún.[72] These data combine to locate the workshop in which this vase was made in the central eastern Peten lowlands.

6.57 MS0249

This is one of the few lidded bowls known to have survived from the Classic Period. The vessel may have been created exclusively as a funerary offering—this delicate bowl shows no wear patterns. The sculpted figure who doubles as the lid's knob may be God A-prime or the spotted Ahaw Headband Twin, both of whom are associated with sacrifice, death and the underworld. *Also see catalog 91.*

Conclusions

This chapter presents only a few of the thousands of pictorial pottery vessels created by pre-Columbian Maya painters. Yet these few allow us a glimpse of the pottery's extraordinary range of pictorial programs and their accompanying hieroglyphic texts that reflect the depth and richness of the ceremonial world of Classic Maya civilization. The imagery provides avenues to understanding Maya cosmology and religion, human history and the continual interaction of the Maya with their deities and the supernatural forces who inhabit their universe, which was requisite for the maintenance of the cosmos.

Given the varied ceremonial roles played by this pottery, the artists must have chosen particular visual narratives to suit the vessel's intended function. For example, those pots destined exclusively for use as burial offerings most likely would be painted with imagery appropriate to the funerary environment. Other vessels are painted with historical imagery; many of these were created to record important rites in which specific elite patrons participated. Sometimes these special vases were painted by artists whose social status and reputation would dictate their recording their names on the artwork in order to imbue it with additional social authority. Because of their widely recognized association with specific rulers and esteemed artists, these vessels are powerful objects when manipulated within the complex social and political matrix that distinguishes the Classic Period. These painted wares would be public signals of the power and prestige of the vessels' patrons. When manipulated as social currency in the realm of regal gift-giving, the power and prestige vested in the object would be transferred to the new owner, who would continue this cycle through its ritual use. Historical images and texts are important for the social cur-

6.58 MS0060

The eight supernaturals incised and painted on this vase elude identification. This imagery narrates pre-Columbian mythology outside that found in the *Popol Vuh* and other sixteenth-century survivals. The short texts name each of the figures, although these border on pseudoglyphs and none has been adequately deciphered. Even though the exact myth has been lost, these figures tell a tale of supernatural sacrifice in the watery realm of the underworld. *Also see catalog 93.*

rency function of these wares, but this does not exclude other themes. Many vessels are painted with images that express Maya worldview. These more philosophical themes also were important to the vessels' social use both as ritual food service ware and as politicized gifts because these presented the most fundamental beliefs that were the foundation of Classic Maya civilization and from which the elite drew their authority.

These extraordinary Classic Period painted vessels were dynamic objects from the moment of the artist's conception to their moment of burial in the tombs of the honored dead. The rich variety of imagery reflects the varied roles played by these vessels and is witness to the intellectual and artistic accomplishments of the Classic Maya. The fantastic variety and complexity of the pictorial themes and hieroglyphic texts has only begun to be understood and promises to engage the active mind for years to come.

Notes

1. See Tate (1992:30) and Morris (1987).

2. Frans Blom (1950) was the first scholar to recognize the correlation between the *Popol Vuh* and the painted pottery. Michael Coe's subsequent research elucidates the correlation between these two art forms (cf. Coe, 1973, 1977, 1978).

3. Bricker (1981), also see Schele and Friedel (1990:424–25).

4. For a general discussion of animal imagery in pre-Columbian Mesoamerican art and the folk art of the modern descendants of the pre-Columbian peoples, see J. F. Peterson (1990) and the accompanying bibliography.

5. Cf. Coe (1973:38–39).

6. After Blaffer (1972:79–80, 131).

7. See Laughlin (1987) and Morris (1987) for discussions of the bat as the emblem of Zinacantan. The bat also is the emblem of the royal house of the Cakchiquel Maya of highland Guatemala, called the *Zotzilá-ha* (literally the "Bat House"), and the ruler is called *Ahpo Zotzil* or "Lord Bat" (D. Tedlock, 1985:179).

8. See Kerr (1989:112) for a Chamá-style vase painted with three spider monkeys wearing the "death collar" and each holding a cacao pod. Mary Baker (1993) has made a convincing argument for some of the supposed howler monkeys depicted on Classic Maya pottery being capuchin monkeys (*Cebus capucinus*). Recent field reconnaissance in southern Belize by Peter Dunham (Department of Anthropology, Cleveland State University) has discovered this genus in the region's tropical rainforest.

9. See Morris (1987:191–92) for photographs and a short discussion of these *Maxetik* monkey impersonators in the town of Chamula, Chiapas, Mexico. It is quite possible that the modern *Maxetik* are a survival from pre-Columbian beliefs.

10. I would like to thank Roberto Dorión (1992:personal communication) for his assistance with identifying this ichthyoid as a catfish. In her analysis of fauna depicted on Classic Maya pottery, Sofía Paredes Maury (n.d.:146) also identified this fish as a catfish.

11. Another possible explanation for the catfish imagery on Maya pottery may be found on the incised bones from *Hasaw Ka'an K'awil*'s tomb at Tikal. On one of the bones, *Hunahpu*, in his guise as GI, is depicted fishing for catfish. The underworld nature of this scene is stated explicitly on another of the incised bones on which *Hasaw Ka'an K'awil* "canoes" into the underworld at his death. The Paddler Twins man the canoe. The netherworld association of this imagery is underscored by the text accompanying the GI bones, which records *Hunahpu*'s "canoeing" through life and into the underworld with *Hasaw Ka'an K'awil* as his metaphorical "captive" (*u-bac*). See Schele and Miller (1986:270) for a discussion of these incised bones and their interpretation.

12. For some of the myriad freshwater fish depictions with this characteristic cross hatching, see Kerr [illegible] and 461.

13. I would like to thank Sofía Paredes Maury (1993 personal communication) for the species identification of these birds. Ms. Paredes Maury also suggested that these two macaws could be the *Ara [illegible]*, a green macaw now extinct in the Petén lowlands.

14. Taube [illegible]

15. See Paredes Maury (n.d.:112–15) for a discussion of generic birds and the iden[illegible] tifying characteristics of specific avians frequently found on the Classic Period pottery. Schele and Miller (1986 [illegible] named this generic bird "The [illegible] The authors describe it as a corn[illegible] like aquatic avian carrying a [illegible] beak, who symbolizes still [illegible] water and the watery [illegible] underworld.

16. Associations of the [illegible] cormorant have been discussed [illegible] Schele, who suggests that [illegible] stellations in the Milky Way [illegible] cormorant. Other [illegible] sources. Schele [illegible] that the Milky Way [illegible] the *Xibal Ba*, that is the [illegible] ancestral dead and [illegible]

17. Other nonhuman beings [illegible] Maya pottery, although [illegible] these are supernatural [illegible] resentations are combinations [illegible] and other animal and [illegible] Among the most common [illegible] *Cauuix* (Seven Macaw [illegible] to be the sun during the [illegible] Creation in the *Popol Vuh* [illegible] known as the Principle Bird [illegible] Celestial Bird by modern [illegible] Maya iconography (cf. [illegible] n.d.; Schele and [illegible] *Muan* Bird also is [illegible] the pottery. His image is [illegible] vessels, most frequently on [illegible] Orange polychrome pottery [illegible] Campeche and Yucatán [illegible] The *Muan* Bird was the [illegible] of the lords of the [illegible] scholars have noted [illegible] to the owl.

Eagles, hawks, [illegible] and turkeys play [illegible] in folk tales as well [illegible] omy. For example, [illegible]

[illegible] constellation identified by [illegible] in the western con[illegible] Barbara B. Tedlock [1992] per[illegible] These birds also [illegible] during the Classic Period [illegible] falcons [illegible] the celestial gods [illegible] Images of these [illegible] are found on [illegible] do not appear [illegible] supernatural birds [illegible]

[illegible] was the [illegible] Paddlers' names in [illegible]

[illegible] publications whose [illegible] imagery in pre-Columbian [illegible] Mesoamerican art see Benson [illegible] and), M. Coe (1973, [illegible] Hammond [1985], Paredes [illegible] and Peterson (1990). Also see [illegible] for important ethnohistoric [illegible] concerning animals and Maya [illegible]

[illegible] This type of ritual transformation [illegible] nahualism in the ethnographic [illegible] to Mesoamerica and is an inte[illegible] part of religions with shamanistic [illegible] For studies of nahualism in Meso-[illegible] and specifically among the Maya [illegible] Bruce (1979), Houston [illegible] Stuart [illegible] Stratmeyer and Strat-[illegible] Villa Rojas (1947) and Wis-[illegible] to mention only a few of [illegible] who have investigated this [illegible]

[illegible] See M. Coe [illegible], Hellmuth (1978) [illegible] Schele and Miller (1986) for detailed [illegible] of prisoner sacrifice rituals.

[illegible] This second type of human sacri-[illegible] carried out by a jaguar is clearly illus-[illegible] by a Jaina figurine published by [illegible] Peterson [illegible]

[illegible] Barbara Tedlock [1992 personal communication]. Linda Schele suggests this constellation may have its pre-Columbian origins in the celestial gods' messenger, the falcon, as recounted in the *Popol Vuh* (Schele, 1992:151).

24. After Milbrath (1981:268–70). Also see Lamb (1981:233–48), Seler (1960), Spinden (1913) and J. E. S. Thompson (1970).

25. See M. E. Miller (1986:47–50).

26. Cf. Schele (1992). The preliminary results discussed here are based upon much research over the years. The reader is referred to the bibliography in Schele's publication for citations of these many other sources.

27. Similar to the stone monuments, the historical information painted on these elite ceramics represents an "edited" version of Maya history. However, this historical representational selectivity does not render this imagery useless in the pursuit of reconstructing Maya history. Instead, these images of elite Maya life are focused representations thereof, their selectivity providing rich ground for historical investigations. By understanding what is, and is not, represented on these vessels, we may see what was of greatest importance to the Classic Maya in terms of the underpinnings of their sociopolitical systems. Of course, these data should not be applied in isolation in the pursuit of social science model building but should be utilized as one of the many subsets of information used by students of Maya history.

28. Although the proper name has yet to be deciphered, the *-ah* instrumental suffix identifies these two glyphs as referring to things associated with sitting, seating (MacLeod 1993 personal communication).

29. Drinking scenes are very common in the Late Classic pictorial pottery. These usually include a group of men with female attendants gathered around an olla (jar) or large basin that holds the beverage to be consumed. Justin Kerr (1989:58) and others have suggested the consumed drink was alcoholic, possibly *balche*. A few examples of this scene appear on K3027, K4113 and K4377 (Kerr, 1992:381, 460, 483), K114, K505, K671, K718, K732, K956, K774, K1092, K1351, K1451, K1550 and K1890 (Kerr, 1989:10, 15, 32, 40, 42, 55, 47, 58, 77, 85, 97 and 122). These drinking bouts are attended by humans and supernaturals alike and take place in human space, the supernatural realm and realms unspecified (probably an intentional choice on the part of the artist; see discussion at the opening of this chapter concerning the overlap of historical and supernatural events). The latter two vases' drinking scenes include the partaking of the liquid as enemas.

30. See M. Coe (1973:62–63) for a detailed discussion of this vase (Grolier Vase #26).

31. This possible tribute payment scene also is recorded on the famous Fenton, or Nebaj, Vase (illustrated in Schele and Miller [1986:Plate 54] and Morley [1946:Plate 89a]).

32. After Schele and Miller (1986:13).

33. See for example the two painted vases from Tomb IV-6 at Tonina (Becquelin and Baudez, 1984 Figure 153). Two figures sit facing each other with a mirror between them. The mirror is set upon its unwrapped cloth wrapping. In these two scenes [illegible] representative of a vision quest [illegible] the partici[illegible] appears to be a scene [illegible]

34. Pendergast (1969:20).

35. See Gutierrez (n.d.a, n.d.b), Leyenaar and Parsons (1988), Scarborough and Wilcox (1991) and Schele and Miller (1986), for only a few of the excellent publications on the Mesoamerican ballgame.

36. Mary Ellen Gutierrez recently has elucidated the symbolic nature of the ballcourt and the playing of the game and their connections with Maya rulership (n.d.a, b). Also see Scarborough and Wilcox (1991), Schele and Miller (1986) and Stone (1992).

37. Simon Martin independently identified the protagonist of this vase and his depiction in the scene (Martin, 1992: personal communication). Martin recognized that this royal person is mentioned on MS0445 as the father of the vase's owner/patron. Lord *Sac-Muan* may be identified as the figure on the right because he wears a bird headdress in contrast to the standing figure on the left who wears a deer headdress. Mary Ellen Gutierrez (n.d.b) suggests that this bird costuming identifies the "winner" of the game and the one who will open the portal to the supernatural world through the sacrifice of his ballgame opponent.

38. The chemical profile and painting style of this vase match those of Tepeu 2 Tikal ceramic production and thus confirm the glyphic reference to Tikal.

39. This act is referred to in the inscriptions at Palenque as "giving birth to the gods," and the deities of the Palenque Triad are named as the children of the rulers, who underwent the self-sacrificial rites (Schele and Miller, 1986:181–84).

40. These two may be the Hero Twins represented by GI and GIII of the Palenque Triad.

41. See M. E. Miller (1986) for thorough analyses of these murals. Nikolai Grube (1992) deciphered the hieroglyph for "dance" found in the stone inscriptions and on vessels depicting dance events (cf. the *Ik'*-style pottery). Grube notes that dance played a central role in Maya rituals. He further suggests that much of the architecture found in the central plazas of Maya sites provides an excellent stage for the enactment of elaborate dance rituals.

42. The vertical red line marking the "beginning" and "ending" point of this scene is curious in that one of the seated supernaturals is half-concealed behind this line. If we entertain the idea that the two seated, flanking figures are also representations of constellations, it is possible that this red bar represents the horizon line, below which disappears the Milky Way and the constellations that ride this celestial road.

43. A number of Maya epigraphers simultaneously deciphered the glyph for *way*, including Nikolai Grube, Werner Nahm, Stephen Houston, David Stuart, Linda Schele and Barbara MacLeod. Houston and Stuart (1989) were the first to publish their findings. The references cited by these authors provide an excellent introduction to the anthropological literature on shamanic transformation.

44. See Houston and Stuart (1989:6–7) for a discussion of this same interpretation of the representations of co-essences on Classic Maya pottery.

45. An alternative reading of these *way* texts suggests that they do not contain the names of historical people but instead name the *ways* of supernaturals. This recalls the pattern noted in the inscriptions on Copán Temple 11, in which a serpent is recorded as the *way* of God K. See Houston and Stuart (1989:7–9) for their discovery and discussion of this deity's *way*. These *ways* also are found on the Holmul-style pottery seated in the dancers' backracks. Their accompanying [illegible]inal phrases include the mainsigns o[illegible]ous emblem glyphs, which suggests [illegible] these emblems are derived from the names of supernatural beings wh[illegible] turn, are the basis of the power of the [illegible] families who ruled these various p[illegible] (Reents-Budet, 1991:217–22).

46. This same figure is found on a small cylinder vase in the Maya Ph[illegible]graphic Archive at Dumbarton Oaks [illegible] cb2-394). The painting style and [illegible] graphic program of this vase equals [illegible] MS0739. The two must have been p[illegible] by the same artist and perhaps both rep[illegible]sent another "service" set created as [illegible] integrated pair of vessels (one a cylin[illegible] vase [LC-cb2-394], the other a wide [illegible] [MS0739]). Interestingly, both have [illegible] same *Ahaw* glyph in their iconogra[illegible] programs. MS0739 uses five dots [illegible]sent the number five, whereas [illegible] employs the more usual bar sign [illegible] numeral.

47. Ball (1993:personal commun[illegible]tion).

48. See Schele and Miller [illegible] for an in-depth discussion of these [illegible] imagery.

49. See D. Tedlock (1985) and [illegible] (1985:178, 1992).

50. From this vase and the [illegible] illustrations of this scene throug[illegible] Maya art, the figure can be ide[illegible] the Maize God (Taube 1985, [illegible]). This same image is the central [illegible] Tikal Dancer plates and is the [illegible] Dancer" frequently found on [illegible] style pottery (cf. Reents [illegible] Budet 1991). Also see Taube [illegible] (n.d.) analysis of the roles [illegible] women in these scenes.

51. One of the few vases w[illegible] bined programs is K1355. [illegible]

[illegible] Museum

[illegible]

[illegible] Museum of Art

[illegible] Museum of [illegible]

[illegible] expressed by

[illegible] have been [illegible] published [illegible] This [illegible] American [illegible] History in New York [illegible] compositional [illegible] detail of image [illegible] The image is that of two [illegible] shell paint pots. [illegible] pots the same icon em- [illegible] these containers. The [illegible] appears to be a list of deities [illegible] is found on MS1126. [illegible] See Nott [illegible] 1992:377) for a [illegible] imagery and pictorial [illegible] humanoid, who may be [illegible] one of the supernatural [illegible] and half-brothers of [illegible] Twins, either *Hun Batz* or *Hun* [illegible] shell paint pots. As [illegible] the shell ink pots have icons [illegible] them, which may identify [illegible] painters' "ink" vessels. [illegible] Berta Schele has proposed these [illegible] God D's Classic Period name [illegible] See Robiesek and Hales [illegible] and M. Coe [1989:161–84] for [illegible] of MS1126.

[illegible] See M. Coe (1989:174) for a dis- [illegible] of a similar scene painted on a [illegible] vase.

[illegible] Tikal [illegible] on the [illegible] pottery of the Twins with [illegible] Vase 3 in Blom Plate (Blom [illegible] Morley [illegible]).

[illegible] Michael Coe does not believe the [illegible] glyph at I to be the name of *Hun Ahpu*. See his discussion of this vase for an alternative reading (Coe, 1989:124).

61. See Robiesek and Hales (1982:31). The chemical profile of MS1126 and its ceramic typological attribution suggest that the vase was made in the central Campeche region (see Appendix 1). Therefore, it would seem unusual to have a Tikal lineage member's name recorded on a vase whose place of manufacture was probably far to the north. It is more likely that these final two glyphs are titular in nature.

62. See M. Coe (1973:92–95) and Schele and Miller (1986:286–87).

63. The glyph next to the woman who peers toward the sacrificial scene has been repainted in modern times and bears little resemblance to pre-Columbian hieroglyphic writing.

64. See M. Coe (1973:93) for the first interpretation, Schele and Miller (1986:287) for the second.

65. See Kerr (1989, 1990, 1992) for scores of photos of Classic Period pictorial pottery whose images are filled with supernatural beings.

66. Karl Taube (1991 personal communication) convinced me of the fishlike nature of this creature.

67. See Kerr (1992:430) for a rollout photograph of this stucco and painted vase (K3717) embellished with four feathered fishlike creatures.

68. After Schele (1992:137), and Schele and Miller (1986:193–94). See K1834 (Kerr, 1989:114) for another rendition of this vision serpent.

[illegible] This white wrapping [illegible] shell [illegible] has been neglected. Note the [illegible] end of the wrapping emerging at the figure's back.

70. See Taube (1992:16–17) for a description of the identifying characteristics of Maya deities.

71. See Taube (1992:115–19, Fig. 61) for a discussion of God S and drawings of the spotted Ahaw Headband Twin, including two Early Classic versions with the crest on his head.

72. This pottery style is characterized by the bright orange background and all imagery created by delicate lines incised through the black-painted imagery. Underscoring the artist's exceptional control is the fact that these extremely thin and well-controlled lines were incised into the hard surface of the fired vessel. Another very similar vase with equally gruesome sacrificial imagery is K3844 (Kerr, 1992:443). Two other stylistically similar vessels are found in the chemical and photographic databank of the Maya Polychrome Ceramics Project (MS0062 and MS0732). MS0062 is illustrated in Chapter 2. Reents-Budet has observed a few stylistically similar sherds in the Uaxactún type collections in the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología de Guatemala.

7. Collecting Pre-Columbian Art and Preserving the Archaeological Record

7.1

Las Ruinas, Belize. An extensive looter's trench bifurcates this pyramidal structure. The mound is collapsing from exposure to the natural forces and soon will be nothing but a pile of rubble (photograph by D. Reents-Budet).

A Brief History of the Collecting of Classic Maya Painted Pottery

One of the traits shared by nearly every society throughout the history of human civilization is the collecting of objects of historical value, curiosity and beauty, the acquisition and ownership of which bestows social prestige. For example, to be considered an educated person in ancient Rome or dynastic China, one had to have a collection of ancient art. Pre-Columbian Maya pottery has played, and continues to play, its own unique role in the history of collecting objets d'art.

The earliest evidence of collecting Classic Period painted pottery comes from the pre-Columbian Maya themselves, who kept vessels as heirlooms and also removed art from ancient tombs, sometimes inscribing new hieroglyphic texts on these objects.[1] In the post-Columbian period, the collecting of pre-Columbian Maya pottery has a relatively short history, dating back only into the nineteenth century, when the American traveler and adventurer John Lloyd Stephens acquired for study a carved Classic Period vase in the town of Ticul, Yucatan.[2] With the growing interest during the nineteenth century in archaeology and the ancient Maya, the painted pottery began to play a more important role in historical research and cultural interpretations and in the creating of collections of ancient art.[3] The pioneering scholar Herbert J. Spinden was the first person since the Classic Period to consider painted Maya pottery as true art with aesthetic merit in and of itself.[4] The ensuing decades (between 1910 and 1930) saw sporadic collecting by both amateur and professional archaeologists for their respective institutions as well as by the first connoisseur/collectors of pre-Columbian art.[5]

During this time, the discipline of American archaeology was in its early stages of development, and one of the primary questions was that of the chronologies of the various cultures in Mesoamerica. Because pottery is a durable and long-lasting material and because it is a sensitive indicator of culture change, archaeologists focused on Classic Maya painted pottery as the primary chronological indicator to date a site's architectural remains and thus chart its developmental history. Pottery remains the primary chronological indicator even with the advent of such absolute dating techniques as carbon-14 analysis.[6] Interestingly, as this pottery played more of a role in social science and archaeology during

the 1930s through the 1970s, its consideration as art proportionately languished. For example, A. Ledyard Smith's 1932 publication of some of the finest examples of painted pottery excavated from Uaxactún mentioned only in passing their aesthetic value. Today these are considered some of the finest national art treasures of Guatemala. The great Mayanist Sylvanus Morley also focused on the Classic Period pottery as an archaeological chronological tool, discussing the technology of pottery production while only touching upon the fact that it was painted with intricate scenes and hieroglyphic texts.[7]

With the accumulation of archaeological data during the 1960s, when scholars also renewed their interest in the hieroglyphic stone inscriptions, nominal interest was paid to the aesthetic and intellectual aspects of the hieroglyphic texts painted on the polychrome pottery. However, a certain bias prevailed among archaeologists and the early epigraphers, who believed the pottery texts were painted by illiterates, were not intended to be read and thus were of no value to the investigation of Classic Maya culture.[8] These viewpoints resulted in the painted pottery remaining an archaeological, chronological and sociological tool and not being recognized as stemming from a time-honored aesthetic tradition steeped in intellectual pursuits.

In the last few decades, art historians have been examining the pottery from aesthetic and iconographic perspectives. Their publications feature these ceramic objects as artistic achievements in their own right and set the stage for the full recognition of Classic Maya polychrome pottery as a fine painting tradition to be studied in the same formal manner as European paintings on canvas.[9] This recognition accompanied the growing interest in non-Western art during the 1960s and 1970s, and more museums and private individuals began collecting Classic Maya art. The first exhibition to focus on Maya polychrome pottery was organized by archaeologist Michael Coe for the Grolier Club in New York City in 1971, followed in 1978 by a second exhibition at the Princeton Art Museum.[10] Coe's pioneering efforts set the stage for two major exhibitions of Maya art in the 1980s, both of which included significant numbers of painted pottery.[11]

As more archaeological and art historical investigations center on the Maya, and as scholars and museums disseminate the results of these investigations through publications, public lectures, exhibitions and educational television, not surprisingly the public has become more interested in the Maya and in Classic Period art. Because of this increased interest in the Maya and the recognition of the arts of non-Western cultures as important components of the history of human creativity, the collecting of pre-Columbian art dramatically increased in the 1970s and 1980s. Since little interest had been paid to pre-Columbian art in the past, few objects were available for sale when the market demand rose. In order to supply this new market with Maya [illegible] archaeological sites were, and continue to be, illegally and unscientifically excavated (i.e., looted and destroyed) to meet the market demand.

The Value of Collecting Pre-Columbian Art

The justifications for collecting pre-Columbian art are compelling. First, collections can be a centerpiece for learning about a culture. In an ever-shrinking world, it is opportune to learn greater respect for, and ways to understand and cooperate with, the world's myriad cultures. An excellent and proven way to build these conceptual bridges is to learn about other societies through their art. There is no substitute for teaching culture history using actual objects created by the people being studied, and museum art collections share with the public the intellectual and artistic creativity of other cultures. Further, museums create educational programs around their collections, disseminating in a comprehendible manner the results of archaeological and other scientific research that usually is not available to the general public nor on such a large scale.

Art collections also can be important repositories of cultural information. This book exemplifies the kinds of discoveries that can be made from the isolated object when studied from a multiplicity of perspectives. In the pursuit of pre-Columbian history, so little of the cultural record survives that every piece of information and every object is invaluable to the reconstruction of the cultural puzzle. Also, museum and private art collections preserve objects that may not have survived indefinitely in their original contexts because of environmental changes and/or modern construction activities (e.g., the building of new roads and suburbs, agricultural endeavors, etc.).[12] Foreign museums and private collections often are better protected than are the national collections in many Latin American institutions because the governments' budgets cannot provide the funding needed to properly care for their pre-Columbian collections.[13]

Collecting Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology Today

All these points in support of collecting pre-Columbian art are valid and true and should be given full consideration in debates about the legal and ethical issues surrounding the acquisition and public display of this art. In spite of these compelling points, there remains a serious problem concerning collecting pre-Columbian art. Because there is no established legal and controlled manner in which pre-Columbian objects enter the art market, objects come to the market in a clandestine manner: looters illegally sack archaeological sites and covertly smuggle these objects out of the countries of origin. This looting seriously damages the historical record, destroys archaeological sites and robs countries of their national patrimony.

When an archaeological site is mined for its art treasures, looters are more interested in fast and undocumented work. They remove the objects as soon as possible and leave the scene in due haste. In the Maya region, the mining of a site requires the digging of large trenches in the pyramidal substructures (or platforms)

a.

b.

7.2

Excavation of an elite tomb with pottery objects in situ; from Structure 5D-86, Burial 019, Mundo Perdido Complex at Tikal, Guatemala (photographs courtesy Proyecto Nacional Tikal).

a. Detail of skeletal remains with jadeite jewelry and organic remains.

b. Detail of pottery vessels, *Spondylus* shells, jadeite tubular beads and organic remains.

that supported most Maya buildings. The looters leave these trenches open and unsupported, exposing the interiors of the platforms and pyramids (Figure 7.1). In a very short time, the trenches collapse, bringing down the buildings on top and destroying all information found within the platform.

Looting also destroys all contextual data for the object. A looted art object can only tell us a small part of its story and what it has to convey about the people who made and used it. In archaeology and art history, the context in which an object is found provides most of the historical data. And it is this contextual information that allows us to create a much clearer, and more fascinating, picture of the historical moment (Figure 7.2a, b).

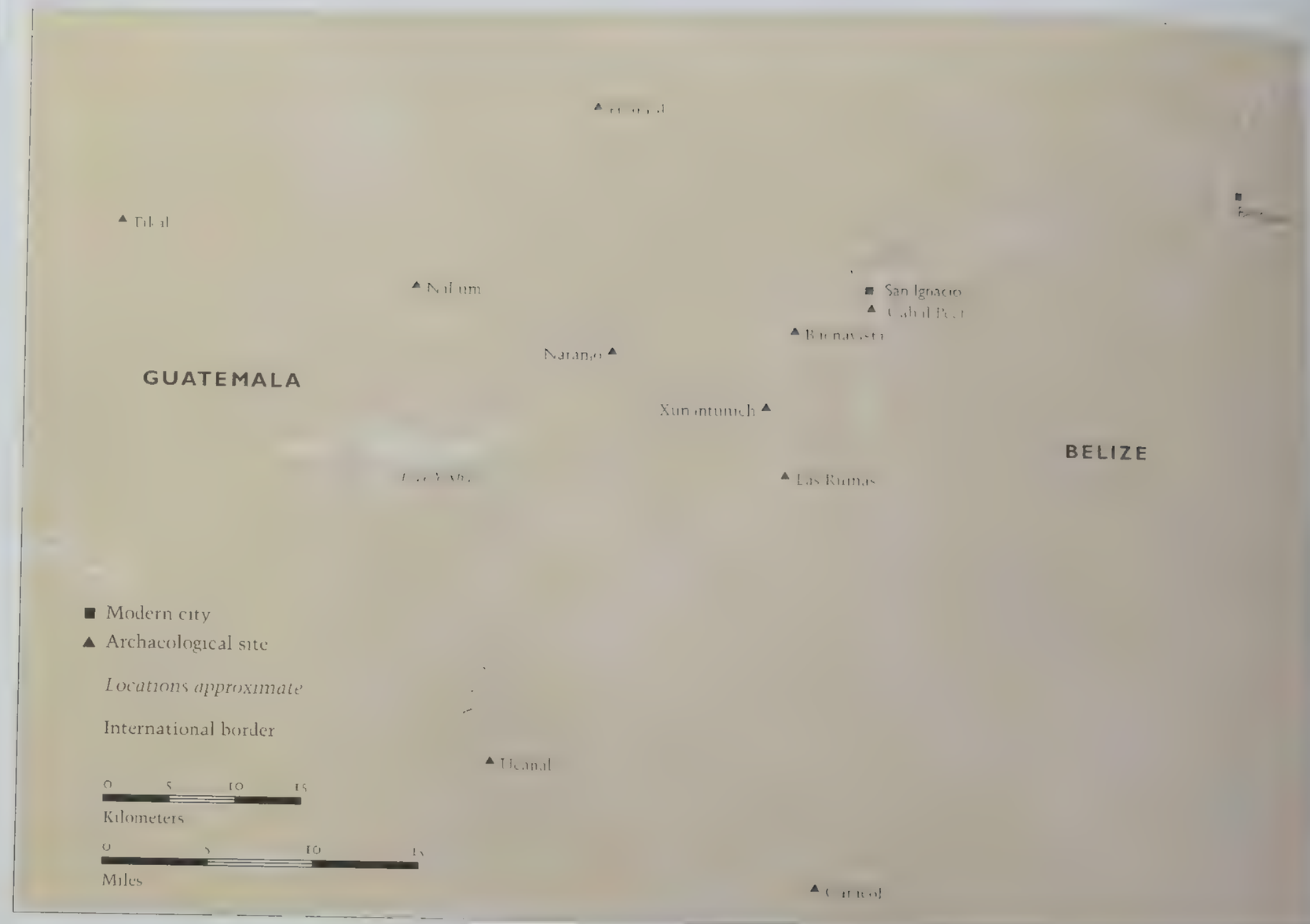
The Buenavista Vase: Two Stories

The Buenavista Vase (figures 7.3 and 7.4) provides an outstanding example of the wealth of information provided by an archaeologically excavated art object. To make this point, we will tell the vase's story first as if it were an isolated object on the world art market, employing various scientific and art historical analyses to reconstruct its history. Then we will retell the vase's story, bringing into play all the information stemming from its controlled excavation from its archaeological context. The marked difference between the two histories demonstrates dramatically the inestimable value of an art object's archaeological context for historical reconstruction, cultural understanding and intellectual enjoyment.

The Buenavista Vase is painted in the Holmul-style, named for the archaeological site of Holmul where pots painted in this style were first excavated in 1911 (Figure 7.5).[14] The style is recognizable by its palette of red and orange on a cream background, with restricted use of black paint (see Chapter 5 and figures 5.14–5.27). Most Holmul-style vases are painted with an iconographic program called the "Holmul dancer theme," which depicts a male figure dancing out of the underworld at the moment of apotheosis. The vases' pictorial surface usually is divided into two equal halves, a dancer appearing on each side of the vase. A specific version of the Primary Standard Sequence is painted around the rim of the vessels, and many have short vertical texts extending into the main pictorial area next to the dancer.

7.3 *Vase of the Buenavista Vase*
This impressive example of the Holmul painting style was made in the vicinity of Naranjo. The vase's royal patron is Lord K'ak' Tilw, who ruled Naranjo from A.D. 693 to somewhere after A.D. 731. This artist's work is summed up as recognizable by his choice of contrasting line and color, unusually large hieroglyphs and his idiosyncratic ways of painting these glyphs. *Also see overleaf.*

7.4 *Vase of the Buenavista Vase (overleaf)*
The vase text records this vase as a ritual drinking vessel made at the behest of Lord K'ak'-Tilw, the holy ahaw of Naranjo.



7.5

Map of the east-central Petén showing the location of Buenavista, Naranjo, Holmul and Ucanal.

Scores of vessels painted in the Holmul style have come onto the international art market in the past seventy years. Comparisons among these highlight their remarkable diversity, which includes the tonal variations of the red and orange palette, the wide variability in painting quality, the elaborateness of the dancer imagery, the adroitness of the epigraphic contents and the calligraphy of their hieroglyphic texts, and even the vessel shapes. For example, compare the outstanding artistry of the Buenavista Vase with one created by a less-skilled artist (cf. MS1643; Figure 7.6).

Examining the unprovenienced (looted) Holmul-style pots from an art historical perspective, we can make educated guesses about their pre-Columbian histories. Given the large numbers of Holmul-style vessels and their marked variation in coloration, shape and thematic interpretation, we can deduce that these pots were created in many different workshops at a number of sites located in a rather large area. The variation in painting quality and epigraphic skills strongly suggests that these vases were made for a broad range of Classic Maya consumers, from the top elite to people of lower social and economic status. Yet because we lack archaeological information about these unprovenienced vessels, we have no idea how many workshops from which archaeological sites were involved in this production.
In the case of the two vessels from Holmul (MS1013 and MS1019; figures 5.14 and 5.26b), we must always keep in mind that finding a vessel at a site does not necessarily mean that the vase was created there.

By subjecting unprovenienced vessels to neutron activation analysis, the production relationships among them and the probable locations of the responsible workshops can be determined (see Chapter 5). This scientific technique provides a chemical fingerprint of each vase's pottery paste, which represents the specific mixture of clays and tempers from which the ancient potters created these vessels. This chemical fingerprint then can be compared to the chemical analyses of paste samples taken from potsherds excavated from specific archaeological sites which provides an aggregate chemical profile for ceramic production at the sampled site. When a chemical match is found between a whole vessel and excavated potsherds, we can infer that the site was the location of the workshop where the vessel in question was created.

Not surprisingly, the chemical profiles of the sampled Holmul-style vessels are as diverse as their painting characteristics. In some cases, whole vessels' chemical profiles coincide with those of potsherds from Holmul as well as from Naranjo, a site located about 30 kilometers south of Holmul (Figure 7.5). Yet the chemistry of many of the unprovenienced vessels does not match that from any sampled site in the area, indicating that other sites also were creating pottery in this style. However, when all sampled Holmul style vessels are compared to the chemical profiles of ceramic production across the Maya region, the vessels pull together as a group, indicating that the Holmul style was restricted to workshops at sites located in the general vicinity of Holmul and Naranjo. Therefore, the chemical data support the conclusions reached through the art historical analysis of these unprovenienced vessels.

7.6 MS1643

This Holmul style vase was painted by a less-skilled artist than the one who created the Buenavista Vase and the Cormorant Vase (MS1416 and MS1684; figures 7.3 and 7.9). This vase probably was produced for consumers from the lower tiers of Maya society (photograph by Ronald L. Bishop).

The Buenavista Vase: Story I

The Buenavista Vase is one of the most beautifully painted of the Holmul-style pots, and its artistry strongly implies its being the work of a highly accomplished painter (MS1416; figures 7.3 and 7.4). Who was this master painter? Where was his workshop located? Who was the elite patron for whom he worked? Why was this vase created and how was it used by the Classic Maya?

The first three questions can be answered using art historical and chemical analyses without the aid of archaeological contextual information. It is easiest to surmise for whom the pot was created. The hieroglyphic text painted around the rim of the vase reads in Mayan *ay-a hoy y-uch'ab ta tsih te'el kakaw*, or "[it] came into being, was dedicated his drinking vessel for tree-fresh cacao." The phrase ends with the name of the vase's owner/patron, Lord *K'ak'-Til*, ruler of Naranjo. The artist who painted the Buenavista Vase also painted at least three others at the behest of his royal patron. He did not sign any of these masterpieces, possibly because his œuvre is so distinctive that it did not need his signature to be recognized as his work.

Naranjo has nine carved stone monuments that recount the life and exploits of the powerful Lord *K'ak'-Til*. These texts tell us that he ruled the site from A.D. 693 to sometime after A.D. 719 (9.13.1.3.19 to after 9.14.7.13.6 in Maya long count calendric notation).[15] The stone monuments also inform us that he successfully waged wars against neighboring sites (or polities) and expanded the influence of Naranjo over a wide area during his twenty-six years of reign.

Because the Buenavista Vase was made for Lord *K'ak'-Til*, one may assume that the vase was created in an elite pottery workshop at Naranjo. To check this hypothesis, the vase's chemical profile was examined. Its chemistry points to this general region as the location of the workshop where the vase was created, although it does not resemble closely any of the sampled pottery from Naranjo—nor from any site in the area. Two hypotheses can be proposed to explain the situation: the Buenavista Vase was not made at Naranjo, or its unusual chemical profile indicates highly specialized ceramic production at the site.[16] Where was the Buenavista Vase made? Who was the artist? And how was the Buenavista Vase used by its royal patron beyond its being his drinking vessel for a cacao beverage?

Some of the answers to these questions may come from another vase, MS1684 (Figure 7.7). MS1684 is painted in the Holmul-style, although the artist decorated the vase with images of cormorants standing above water symbols. The Cormorant Vase and the Buenavista Vase are remarkably similar in color, use of pictorial space and all details of line. These similarities strongly suggest the work of the same master painter. Interestingly, the Cormorant Vase's PSS text ends with the patron/owner's name, which is not Lord *K'ak'-Til*, but Lord *Itsam Balam* of Ucanal, a site located thirty-five kilometers south-southwest of Naranjo (Figure 7.5). Curiously, the chemical profile of the Cormorant Vase is similar to profiles of ceramic production at Naranjo

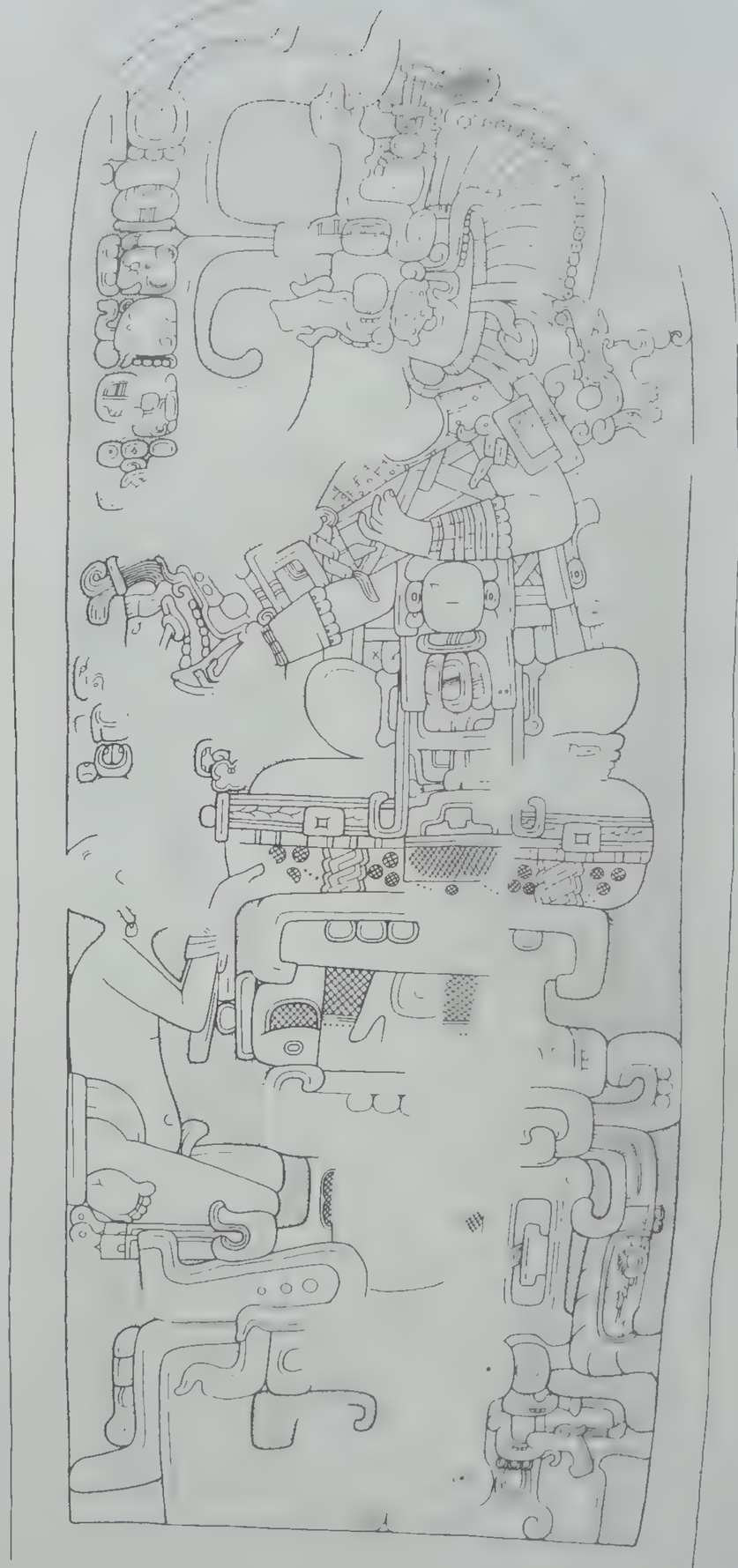
[illegible] should be noted that although the same artist prob[illegible] vases, their respective slip paints are [illegible] rent from each other. The Cormorant Vase's slip is very glossy, a characteristic of Naranjo Late Classic pottery. The slip paint on the Buenavista Vase is [illegible] ch less glossy and may represent a slightly different [illegible]

[illegible] uing question is why would an elite artist [illegible] tery for his royal patron and then create an[illegible] for a ruler of another site? And why would [illegible] ere be a change in clay/temper recipe and slip characteristics? The answer may be found on Naranjo Stela 22 [illegible] inscriptions detail the successful war waged by Lord *K'ak'-Til* against the ruler of Ucanal on September 7, A.D. 698 (9.13.6.10.4 6 Kan 2 Zac, in the [illegible] system). On the front of Stela 22, the defeated Ucanal lord is depicted with bound wrists and seated at the feet of the victorious Lord *K'ak'-Til*.[17]

Combining the history recorded on Stela 22 with the analyses of the Buenavista and Cormorant vases, we can propose that Lord *K'ak'-Til* was engaged in diplomatic entreés to bring Ucanal under his political control. Part of his calculated diplomacy included public and private rituals during which finely painted pottery was used as elite service ware and as social currency. Lord *K'ak'-Til* may have given to Lord *Itsam Balam* the Cormorant Vase as an outward sign of his underlying intentions toward Ucanal. Ucanal may not have shared the political vision of Lord *K'ak'-Til*, and the two sites ended up at war. Lord *Itsam Balam* was taken captive during battle and brought to Naranjo as a humiliated prisoner of war destined for sacrifice.

7.7 MS1684; the Cormorant Vase

This vase probably was painted by the same artist who created the Buenavista Vase. Note the highly individualistic manner of painting the hieroglyphs and the fine control of line that characterize this master's works. The slip paint on MS1684 is more glossy than that on the Buena Vista Vase, and the vessels' respective chemical profiles are slightly different. These observations indicate different mixtures of clays and tempers, which may represent the minor recipe changes that result through time It is highly likely that these two vases were not made or painted at the same time but instead were created some years apart by the master artist who worked under the auspices of Lord *K'ak'-Til*. *Also see catalog 94.*



7.8 Naranjo Stela 22

Lord *K'ak'-Til* sits on his jaguar-pelt-covered throne cushion and holds a ceremonial bar of office in his arms. The nearly naked Ucanal lord *Itsam Balam* lifts his bound wrists toward his captor. The hieroglyphic text carved on the rear of the monument records his defeat in battle at the hands of Lord *K'ak'-Til*, and the short text above the captive records his name and the Ucanal emblem glyph. Lord *Itsam Balam*'s eventual sacrifice is implied by his sitting on two femurs that recall the sacrificial thrones on MS0739 (6.44) (drawing by Ian Graham, courtesy Peabody Museum, Harvard University).

The Buenavista Vase probably was also used during important state rituals that were public proclamations of power. Events of this type certainly were part of the Ucanal affair. The Buenavista masterpiece more than likely completed its pre-Columbian life in the tomb of its owner/patron, Lord *K'ak'-Til* at Naranjo. The Cormorant Vase also may have ended up in the tomb of a member of Lord *Itsam Balam*'s family at Ucanal. The two vases' divergent chemical compositions and slip paint recipes easily could represent a minor technical change in the royal workshop caused by differing paste and slip paint formulations during the many years this workshop was producing fine pottery for Lord *K'ak'-Til*.

Left unanswered, however, are the most important questions. Was the Buenavista Vase created to be used as a ritual food service vessel at Naranjo or did it function as social currency outside the immediate Naranjo vicinity? Was the vase found in the tomb of Lord *K'ak'-Til* and, if not, where did it end its pre-Columbian life? It is here where the archaeological data can radically change the hypothetical historical reconstruction presented above and can give us a more accurate and fascinating piece of Classic Maya history.

The Buenavista Vase: Story 2

The Buenavista Vase was excavated by archaeologists Joseph Ball and Jennifer Taschek of San Diego State University. The vase was not found at Naranjo or Ucanal, or anywhere in Guatemala for that matter. In fact, it was excavated from the modest site of Buenavista del Cayo, Belize, located fifteen kilometers east of Naranjo and across the modern international border. The vase was found in a burial placed inside a building on top of the largest pyramid at Buenavista (Structure BV-1; Figure 7.9). The placement of the burial and its accompanying artifacts prompted Taschek and Ball to suggest that the interred person was of great importance, such as a ruler of the site (Figure 7.10). Interestingly, however, the skeleton in the burial was not an older person, as one would expect if these were the remains of one of the site's kings. Instead, it was a young adult male who, because of the magnificence of his burial's location and furnishings, likely was a member of the local ruling elite.[19]

Ball and Taschek also found one of Buenavista's elite pottery workshops, located in a "palace" architectural complex built near the center of the site (Figure 7.11). This workshop was producing large quantities of vessels painted in the Holmul-style, but all represented a local interpretation of the style (Figure 7.12). The local characteristics include the dancers facing to the right (facing to the left is the style's norm) and lesser-quality painting, which is particularly noticeable in the poor renderings of the human figures. Buenavista Holmul-style pottery also is distinguishable by its pseudoglyphs rather than Primary Standard Sequence texts.[20] The chemical compositions of the sherds and whole vessels found in the palace dump are similar to each other and create a unique profile that represents local Buenavista production. Stylistically and chemically, all of these sherds and whole vessels are distinct from the Buenavista Vase.

Thus the archaeological data paint a much different picture than that suggested by the Buenavista Vase as an isolated object. The contextual information radically changes our hypothetical history of the vase and, by inference, changes our historical interpretation of the vase and its role in this part of the Maya world during the late seventh and early eighth centuries A.D. The Buenavista Vase did not end its life in the tomb of its patron, the renowned Lord *K'ak'-Til*, ruler of powerful Naranjo. Surprisingly, it ended its pre-Columbian life in the burial of an elite adolescent male at the rather provincial site of Buenavista. The vase probably was created in a royal workshop at Naranjo by an elite artist with close connections to Lord *K'ak'-Til*. His creations were so individualistic that he was a well-known master painter whose works were recognized by his contemporaries. Lord *K'ak'-Til* commissioned masterpieces from this artist, which he then used as royal gifts during important social and political events. These events and their material trappings were part of the process of solidifying bonds between Naranjo and other sites that Lord *K'ak'-Til* wished to bring under his control. One of these

[illegible] to bring under his control. One of these [illegible]

[illegible] that Lord *K'ak'-Til* gave the Buenavista [illegible] as a funerary offering for the [illegible] adolescent who may have been a close relative of the ruler, such as his son. However, it is much more likely that he gave the vase to the Buenavista ruler as a regal gift signifying social and political ties between them and their respective polities.[21] The Buenavista ruler would have used the vase in his own regal ceremonies as a public signifier of his connections with the more powerful Lord *K'ak'-Til*. Conjecture can go one step further and suggest either that Buenavista was a vassal state of Naranjo at this point in its history or that its ruler was attempting to increase his own power through an alliance with Naranjo. Whichever is the case, the vase would underscore the Buenavista ruler's authority and increase his social and political power in the eyes of his constituents because of its, and his, recognized connection with Lord *K'ak'-Til* and his royal artist.

We also might speculate that Lord *K'ak'-Til*'s giving away one of his personal artist's pots intimates the degree of importance he placed on this alliance, which in turn intimates the importance to Naranjo of Buenavista and its subservient lands. That is, the Naranjo ruler's making a gift of this exceptionally fine vase to the lord of Buenavista is the material reflection of an important political connection for Naranjo. Underscoring this is the fact that Lord *K'ak' Til*'s artist painted this fine vase in the same Holmul-style as was produced in the Buenavista elite ceramic workshop. By so doing, the artist was acknowledging Buenavista's elite ceramic production as part of the region's established traditions while highlighting the prestige of his patron (and that of the vase's subsequent owner) through the higher quality painting of the Buenavista Vase.

The archaeological data also provide critical information to substantiate the hypothetical history for the Cormorant Vase (MS1684; Figure 7.7). Unfortunately, this vase is without provenience. However, it can be speculated that the Cormorant Vase's story is similar to the Buenavista Vase's story. In this case, Lord *K'ak'-Til* probably commissioned the Cormorant Vase to be made for Lord *Itsam Balam*, ruler of Ucanal. The vase's wide recognition as the work of Lord *K'ak'-Til*'s regal artist endows it with added prestige for both giver and receiver, and as a regal gift it would be a noteworthy sign of his political aspirations toward Ucanal.

The discovery of the Buenavista Vase in a royal burial at Buenavista del Cayo proclaims the political bonds between the site and Naranjo. These bonds are not recorded on Naranjo's stone monuments, and Buenavista's stelae are too eroded to recover any of their carved or painted historical information.[22] Therefore, the Buenavista Vase is our only surviving documentation of the historical connections between these two sites. The archaeologists' careful documentation of the context in which the vase was found provides an unparalleled wealth of information that can only be achieved through controlled excavations. If this vase had been looted and had come onto the art market without archaeological provenience, we would have lost forever this unique and fascinating piece of the historical puzzle of the Classic Maya. And, in spite of the fact that we can recover bits of history through the use of sophisticated scientific techniques in tandem with more traditional investigations, these techniques can provide only limited information. They never can substitute for the proper archaeological excavation of objects.

7.9 Buenavista Structure 85

A burial located below the floor of the building on top of this large pyramid contained the skeletal remains of an adolescent male, more than eight thousand obsidian blades, and the Buenavista Vase (MS1416; [illegible] *see catalog* [illegible]; photograph by D. Reents-Budet).

7.10

Excavation of the Buenavista burial atop Structure BV-1 brought us the Buenavista Vase (MS1416) and eight thousand obsidian blades. The skeletal remains of an adolescent male were found in the burial. His body was dressed in an elaborate regal costume that included ritual jaguar mittens recalling those worn by the "Fat Cacique" on MS1121 (see Figure 6.20) (photograph by J. Taschek).

The Preservation of the Archaeological and Historical Record

It is an undeniable fact that humans are collectors. Our public and private desires for beautiful and intriguing objects will never diminish because art, whose study and appreciation enrich everyone, is an integral part of our collective psyche. The ever-increasing market for ancient art, however, is causing the rapid destruction of the archaeological sites from which these objects are looted. This destruction of cultural resources is similar to the over-exploitation of the world's natural resources, both of which are taking place largely in economically disadvantaged areas whose resident populations must search daily for whatever meager subsistence they can find. Oftentimes this is manifested in the destructive use of local resources. Unlike some natural resources, however, pre-Columbian cultural resources cannot be replanted and regrown. Once a site is looted, it is destroyed forever, and all the history that could have been revealed through proper excavation is lost. Irretrievable pieces of the Classic Maya historical puzzle are gone, and we all are the poorer for these losses.[23]

How can we protect our world cultural resources? There is no single answer to this question; the art market is complex and multifaceted, and its underlying economic, political, social, cultural and intellectual forces affect both the art-supplying and art-purchasing coun-

sites. In order to protect the remaining cultural resources, we must address each and every one of these sites. If we do not, the rapid loss of our world's archaeological cultural heritage will continue unabated until nothing remains.

The most obvious first step in protecting cultural resources is the enactment and better enforcement of antilooting and antismuggling laws in tandem with the ratification of similar laws in those countries where none currently exist. Yet in spite of the myriad laws already on the books, the unfortunate reality is that these measures have not, and cannot, stop the illicit flow of pre-Columbian objects from Latin America and the concomitant destruction of irreplaceable archaeological sites. The looting will not cease as long as the current economic, political and social conditions prevail in the art-exporting countries. The looting also will not cease as long as it remains socially acceptable to acquire ancient art objects irrespective of where they came from. And these kinds of acquisitions will remain acceptable as long as the public is unaware of the moral, ethical and legal issues behind these recently looted objects and the underlying destruction of the world's cultural heritage.

Therefore, a critical step in stemming the destructive tide is to educate people worldwide concerning the ongoing looting catastrophe and its intertwined issues. The success of the "Green Revolution" of the past decade is the model for this approach. By informing the public of the imminent loss of these treasures, and by bringing the public into the protection process, it is possible to save the world's cultural heritage for ourselves and future generations.

An effective, broadly based antilooting program has been created in Belize with education and public involvement as its guiding principles. Its success is due in part to its being a joint venture by the Department of Archaeology, the Ministry of Tourism and the Environment, the Department of Museums, and the Ministry of Education. The program includes the enactment and enforcement of Belizean laws that protect archaeological sites and prohibit trafficking in artifacts and involves all levels of government. It also requires that Belizean citizens register objects already in their possession, allowing them to keep and protect these pieces on behalf of their fellow citizens. The heart of the program, and its most successful component, is the education of all Belizeans concerning the value of protecting their collective heritage. Everyone is involved in the preservation process.

Education takes place through the public school system as well as through local civic and social organizations. The Department of Archaeology has created and administers the national archaeology education program that informs the public about the goals of archaeology and especially the historical value of protected (unlooted) archaeological sites. The program addresses the problem on the local level by tagging looting as socially and intellectually unacceptable. The Department of Archaeology and the Department of Museums have discovered that the children of Belize make the best guards for local archaeological sites. By teaching them why they need, and should want, to preserve these sites, effective protective action takes place daily on the local level.

Belize's program includes the participation of foreign and national archaeologists in the public education programs to demystify archaeology and demonstrate to all Belizeans, as well as to visiting tourists from other nations, the rewards of proper excavation of sites.

7.11

This elite residential compound at Buenavista may have been the site of an elite pottery workshop. The compound, because of its proximity to the ceremonial center of the site, may have been the residence of Buenavista royalty (photograph by D. Reents-Budet).

rewards in which they all share. Archaeologists give special lectures and Belizean citizens visit sites under excavation to view and participate in the archaeological process. This does not mean that everyone has to excavate in order to participate, but people must be given the opportunity to view firsthand the process of archaeology in order to understand its benefits. The citizens of Belize also see that archaeologists are not simply searching for valuable objects to store in the vaults of the Department of Archaeology or to spirit out of the country; instead they see that every tiny potsherd is important and that all the excavated objects remain the property of the people of Belize.

And last, the Department of Archaeology and the Department of Museums use the national archaeological collections as educational tools to reach the public concerning the pressing needs to protect cultural resources. By demonstrating how these excavated objects tell a much clearer and more interesting story, the public experiences for themselves the value of archaeological retrieval of cultural patrimony. When Belize's national museum is built, these educational programs will be an integral part of the museum's daily activities for all visitors.

These kinds of public education programs must take place in all countries and at all levels in order to save the world's cultural heritage. Belize has developed a viable and workable program that demonstrates that only through a properly informed public can the necessary social forces be developed to assist with, and insist upon, appropriate preservation and care of our collective archaeological treasures and cultural heritage. To save pre-Columbian Maya archaeological sites and all they can reveal about this ancient civilization, we rapidly are reaching the point where we need to take action now . . . or never.

In the face of the seemingly insurmountable odds stacked against archaeological sites and the battle to protect the world's cultural heritage, the average citizen *is* a crucial player in helping to protect cultural heritage at home and throughout the world. The average citizen can work toward her/his country creating and implementing an overarching plan that addresses all facets of collecting and preserving art, historical data and archaeological sites. The broadly based educational program in Belize is an excellent starting point. In addition, the average citizen can insist that local museums change their acquisitions habits to acquire only pre-Columbian objects legally in their country, using either the 1970 drafting of the UNESCO agreement on cultural property or the date when one's country signed and implemented the UNESCO treaty (for the United States this date is 1983). In this way, museums will not encourage through

[illegible] conditions future destruction of archaeological [illegible] and the illegal trafficking in newly looted art. Fortunately, in the last few years, U.S. museums are responding to these legal and ethical issues and are [illegible] their policies accordingly. Yet it is surprising [illegible] policies that on the one [illegible] sites and cultural property and also serve the institutions' own interests by taking the high moral ground and being in legal compliance with national and international laws.

Although enactment of the UNESCO agreement is an imperative protective measure museums must take, museumers can go one step further and use the national laws of the countries of origin of the ancient art as their acquisition guidelines. By so doing, the museum would be acquiring objects that are legally out of their country of origin as well as legally in the acquiring country. These same guidelines, because they provide solid legal and ethical positions for the individual, should be used by private citizens who wish to collect ancient art.

In addition to strengthening adherence to both national and international laws, the public must be made more aware of the increasing threats to the world's cultural resources and why the looting of archaeological sites is so destructive on so many levels. This can be achieved through public education programs, as in Belize, in schools, museums and civic organizations. It should be an integral part of the activities of all archaeologists, art historians and museum professionals to develop and participate in the educational process, including the important demystification of art appreciation and archaeology (especially its public persona as the unbridled pursuit of riches). People need to understand why the looting of archaeological sites and the collecting of undocumented art is harmful, and why the archaeological excavation of sites and the collecting of documented art is advantageous to everyone.

7.12

These three Holmul-style vessels were excavated from the extensive trash deposit found outside the noble residential compound at Buenavista, which may have been the site of an elite pottery workshop (see Figure 7.11). This ceramic dump appears to represent vessels discarded from the workshop. Many have fire clouds and other indications of unsuccessful production, which resulted in their being thrown out before they left the workshop (photograph by D. Reents-Budet).

Protecting cultural resources is not only a problem for our Latin American neighbors. The same wanton destruction takes place daily here in the United States. Archaeological sites are being pillaged just as rapidly, and unprovenienced and undocumented artifacts are traded openly throughout the country. The United States, too, is fast losing the battle.

Unfortunately, the space limitations of this book do not allow for further discussions of the multifaceted nature of the tragedy of worldwide looting of archaeological sites to supply the international art market. This is a critical and difficult topic with layer upon layer of interwoven threads. For further reading, see Alsop (1986), Boone (1993), Greenfield (1989), Griffin (1986, 1989), Messenger (1989) and Pendergast (1991). These publications' bibliographies list additional important sources of information on the legal, ethical and moral aspects of collecting ancient, particularly pre-Columbian, art. It cannot be stressed enough that the world's archaeological cultural resources are rapidly being destroyed. Once destroyed, they are gone forever and we will have lost irretrievable chapters in the pageant of human history, intellect and creativity.

Notes

1. Cf. M. Coe (1966). In addition to collecting ceramics, the Maya looted earlier cultures' tombs for jadeite and included these ancient artifacts in their own specialized ritual deposits (cf. Andrews, 1986). The Classic Maya also looted their own burials to acquire precious carved jadeite objects (cf. Smith and Kidder [1951], Fields and Reents-Budet [1992], Reents-Budet and Fields [n.d.]).

2. Stephens (1843, 1:271–75). During the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, pre-Columbian pottery was collected on both sides of the Atlantic. This differs from nineteenth-century collecting in that this earlier collecting was sporadic and usually the result of other pursuits (e.g., agricultural or building activities).

3. Cf. Charney (1888), Dieseldorff (1904), Förstemann (1904), Seler (1904).

4. Spinden (1975).

5. On the archaeological side, for example, the British physician Dr. Thomas Gann excavated mounds and collected pottery in then-British Honduras (modern-day Belize), much of which went to the British Museum or the Liverpool Museum. George Heye's personal collection of artifacts from the Americas became the collection of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation (now the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution) and the museum continued to collect Maya pottery (e.g., the famous Acasaguastlán Vase from Guatemala; Saville, 1919). The Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, sponsored archaeological excavations during this time, and the artifacts from these excavations became the core of the museum's Maya collection. The Carnegie Institution of Washington undertook eleven years of excavations at Uaxactún, Guatemala. The pottery from this project forms the basis of the national collection on display in the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología, Guatemala.

At this same time, pre-Columbian objects were beginning to be recognized as art. Although few connoisseur/collectors from the United States or Europe were participating (with the exception of people such as Robert Woods Bliss and George Heye), the majority of the collectors were found among Mexican intellectuals and industrialists. Artists Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, Rufino Tamayo and Miguel Covarrubias were collecting and studying pre-Columbian art, and the first large private collections were being created among the wealthy class in Mexico (cf. the Televisa, Saenz and Barbachano collections). Some interest in pre-Columbian art was fostered by these famous Mexican artists during their visits to the U.S., and pre-Columbian imagery found its way into the early works of such U.S. artists as Jackson Pollock.

6. The excavations at Uaxactún by the Carnegie Institution established the basic sequence of Maya pottery production, and Robert E. Smith's ceramic sequence (developed from excavations from 1926 to 1937, published in 1955) is still in use today. The time periods he defined provide the basic chronological framework for all archaeological and art historical research. See Willey and Sabloff (1980) for a discussion of this important period in Maya archaeology.

7. Morley (1946).

8. Cf. Morley (1946), Thompson (1962, 1970), Longyear (1952, 1973).

9. Cf. Kelemen (1943), Kubler (1962), Grieder (n.d., 1964), Coe (1973).

10. These exhibitions and books [illegible] *The Maya Scribe and His World* (M. [illegible] 1973) and *Lords of the Underworld: Masterpieces of Maya Ceramics* (M [illegible] 1978).

11. Cf. the Albuquerque Museum's exhibition and catalog, *Maya Tr[illegible] of an Ancient Civilization* (Gallen[illegible] and Johnson, 1985) and the Kimbe[illegible] Museum's *Blood of Kings: Dynasty [illegible] Ritual in Maya Art* (Schele and Mill[illegible] 1986). For a more thorough discussion [illegible] the history of collecting Classic M[illegible] painted pottery, see Miller (1989[illegible]

12. Modern commercial enterprises [illegible] wreaking havoc on archaeologic[illegible] the U.S. as well as in Latin Ame[illegible] of the most famous Mexican cases [illegible] preservation through collecting is that [illegible] Tlatilco, a pre-Classic site near Mex[illegible] City that was being mined for its clay [illegible] make bricks. The Mexican artist M[illegible] Covarrubias tried to interest archaeo[illegible] gists and the government in the site. Although he ultimately was successf[illegible] he and other art collectors and dealers purchased thousands of objects from [illegible] site—before any archaeologic[illegible] work was done there—that today comprise [illegible] main body of data.

13. For in-depth discussions [illegible] collecting viewpoint, see [illegible] 1989).

14. Merwin and Vaillant [illegible] (n.d.; also see Chapter [illegible]

15. After Coffman [illegible]

16. Our chemical prep[illegible] production at Nar[illegible] quate because we have [illegible]

Catalog of the Exhibition

by Virginia M. Fields

Entries in the catalog follow the order in which objects are presented in the exhibition. The attributions are based on chemical and/or stylistic data compiled by the Maya Polychrome Ceramics Project, Conservation Analytical Laboratory, Smithsonian Institution. Type:Variety designations were provided by Joseph W. Ball.

The Classic Maya Artist and His Implements

1. Plate MS1687

Nakbe Region, Guatemala, c. 672–830

Ceramic with red, orange and black on cream slip

Palmar ceramic group: orange-ground Codex-style

37.5 cm (diameter) (14¾ in.)

Anonymous Loan

This unique and elegant depiction of an artist with brush poised over an opened codex conveys the epitome of the refined and educated individual who was the master artist during the Classic Period. The artist, who is seated on a foliated water curl, wears a kilt and waist assemblage as well as a headdress that appears to contain an ear of corn, a possible reference to the Young Maize God. The codex pages are made of *amate*, pounded fig bark paper, which is framed in wood and folded into an accordionlike book. Screenfold books are commonly bound with jaguar-skin covers. Encircling the rim of this Codex-style plate, a glyphic text composed of an *ahaw* head enclosed by maize foliation alternates with a skyband motif. *Also see Figure 2.1.*

2. Cylinder Vase MS0059

Eastern Central Petén, Guatemala, c. 672–830

Ceramic with red, orange and black on cream slip

[too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization]

21.5 × 13.2 cm (diameter) (8½ × 5¼ in.)

Anonymous Loan

Seated on the floor of a palace, an artist wearing a vulture mask prepares to paint in a jaguar-skin-covered codex while a second artist, seated on a throne, carves or paints a human mask. A carved-shell ink pot rests on the codex. The artists face another enthroned individual, under whose throne appears an 8 Ahaw as well as an *olla*. The three figures are elegantly garbed in batik-patterned kilts, jewelry and elaborate headdresses, which, together with the palace setting, portray the artists as members of the Maya elite. The black spots on the cheek of the enthroned individual and the black background of the vessel surface may constitute a reference to an underworld setting, but the architectural detail of the scene suggests a palace setting. The glyphic text around the rim repeats a single compound, *lakam tun* ("stela"). The vertical text behind the figure seated on the floor opens with a Calendar Round date, 7 Manik 5 Uo, which falls on either the Long Count

equivalent 9.13.2.0.7 (A.D. 694) or 9.15.14.13.7 (A.D. 746). The phrase concludes with a *ba-ti* expression, possibly read as "it happened," but whether this refers to the Calendar Round date or to the 8 Ahaw below the throne is unclear. The pillar between the enthroned individuals contains three isolated glyphic compounds, each containing the glyphic elements *ah-cauac-wa*. *Also see figures 2.3, 2.17 and 4.31a.*

3. Figurine of a Seated Maya Scribe MS1072

Palenque Region, Mexico, mid-seventh to ninth centuries

Ceramic

4.2 × 9.5 cm (diameter) (1 3/16 × 3¾ in.)

Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies

The portly stature of the middle-aged scribe, whose right hand rests on a rounded object placed on a folded codex, reinforces the notion that scribes were members of the well-fed elite. *Also see Figure 2.14.*

4. Cylinder Vase MS0347

Nakbé Region, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with red and black on cream slip
Zacatel ceramic group:cream-ground Codex-style
12.2 × 9.6 cm (diameter) (4¾ × 3¾ in.)
Anonymous Loan

Two artists, seated in front of their jaguar-skin-covered pillows, hold the implements of their craft, including stylus and shell paint pot. One artist paints in a codex while the second artist, who wears a spangled headdress, holds a mask. The glyphic texts in front of each figure are comprised of specialized names and/or titles for the artists. *Also see Figure 2.2.*

5. Bowl MS1432

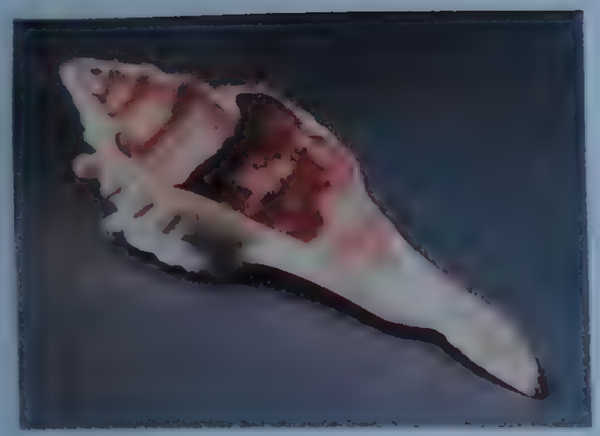
El Zotz' Region, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with red, orange and black on cream slip
Juleki Cream-polychrome:Juleki Variety
16.3 × 15.4 cm (diameter) (6½ × 6⅛ in.)
Anonymous Loan

Three seated painters, under whose arms appears the "print-out" icon associated with scribes, hold raised brushes heavy with paint from their carved shell receptacles. Characteristic of this El Zotz' style is the distinctive pattern on the basal portion of the vessel as well as the style of the hieroglyphic text. The hieroglyphic text relates a standard Primary Standard Sequence, describing the dedication of the writing on a thin-walled vessel that contained fresh cacao (*ay-a huy-i y-ich u-xubal u-hay y-uch'ab ta tsih te'el kakaw*). *Also see figures 2.6 and 4.47*

6. Cut Shell Paint Container

Maya Lowlands, c. 600–900
Conch
29.0 × 13.0 cm (diameter) (11½ × 5⅛ in.)
Princeton Collections of Western Americana, Princeton University Libraries
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Frank E. Taplin, Jr.

Shell pots were used to hold the paints of artists and scribes. Although commonly depicted as part of a scribe's paraphernalia in scenes on painted pottery, such shell containers are rare in the archaeological record. Shell-shaped pots, but made from ceramic, have been found in the tombs of scribes from Copan and Tikal. *Also see Figure 2.8*



7. Modelled Paint Container

Tikal, Guatemala, c. 670–720
Ceramic with black on cream slip
Chinos Black-on-cream:Chinos Variety
18.0 × 9.5 cm (diameter) (7⅛ × 3¾ in.)
Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología, Guatemala

Modelled to resemble a halved-shell paint container, this ceramic version was found in Burial 116 at the ancient Maya city of Tikal. Burial 116, located deep within Temple I, contained the remains of a ruler whose Classic Period name was *Hasaw Ka'an K'awil* and who reigned at Tikal during the late seventh century. The vaulted tomb measured fourteen-and-a-half by eight feet,[1] and the ceiling of the chamber reached thirteen feet high. Lord *Hasaw* was laid out on a woven mat fringed with jade beads and spiny oyster shells, which was placed on a rectangular masonry bench that nearly filled the tomb chamber. Rich offerings, including jade, pearls, pottery, alabaster, carved bone and spondylous shells accompanied Lord *Hasaw* on his journey to the underworld.

The ruler's body was adorned with some 180 pieces of worked jade in the form of necklaces, ear ornaments, bracelets, anklets and headdress. The modelled paint container was found with a number of polychrome vessels on the masonry bench and on the floor of the tomb chamber. The presence of the paint pot in Lord *Hasaw Ka'an K'awil*'s tomb reinforces the notion that painting was one of the pursuits of the elite.

Adorning the interior surface of the paint container is a hieroglyph that reads *cuch* or *cuch-ah*, which in Chol or Yucatec translates as "container" or "place for liquid." *Also see Figure 2.10.*

1. Coe, William R., *Tikal, a Handbook of the Ancient Maya Ruins*, The University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1967, pp. 32–33

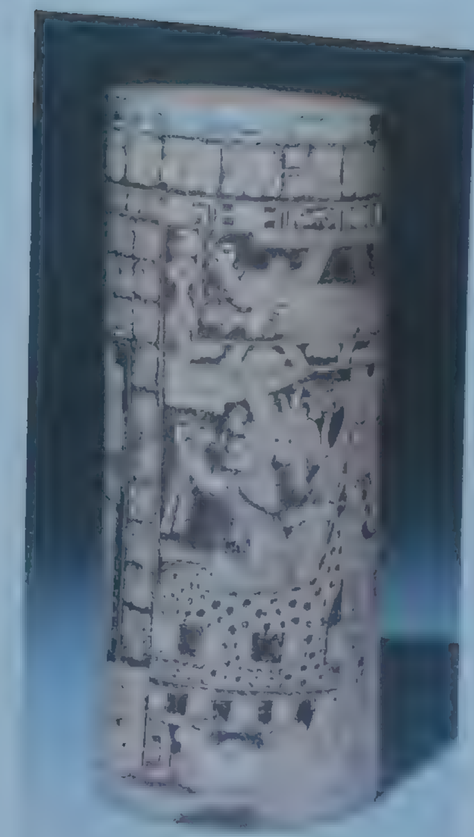
8. Paint Container Carved to Resemble a Human Hand

Maya Lowlands, c. 600–900
Whelk shell
20.5 cm (8⅛ in.)
Josefowitz Collection

The hand position illustrated by this object, with left forefinger extended, reflects depictions of artists on Maya vessels who are shown without a poised brush and pointing towards a codex. *Also see Figure 2.9.*

Artists' Signatures and Their Social Identities

Catalog 11 (detail)



9. Cylinder Vase MS1374

Naranjo, Guatemala, c. 750–800
Ceramic with red, orange and black on cream slip, and remnants of stucco with postfire blue pigment
Cabrito Cream-polychrome:Cabrito Variety
24.0 × 15.8 cm (diameter) (9½ × 6¼ in.)
Art Institute of Chicago, 1986.1081
Ethel T. Scarborough Fund

Analyses of the hieroglyphic texts on catalog items 9, 10 and 11 indicate that the three vessels, each finely painted in a different style, were created by one royal artist from the site of Naranjo *Ek'-Maxam*. The iconographic program illustrated on MS1374 (catalog 9) was first described for two vessels from the site of Holmul, Guatemala, and is known as the Holmul Dancer.[2] The primary image characterizing this style is a dancing male figure who wears an elaborate backrack, and who is accompanied by a dwarf. These paired figures are normally shown twice on vases, but on this vessel the scene is repeated three times.

MS1374 exhibits the most animated version of the Holmul Dancer theme yet discovered. The dancer, characterized by his step-cut hairstyle and jade bead headband, wears an ornate backrack assemblage and elaborate jewelry. The zoomorphs who sit in the middle of the backracks holding disembodied heads include the water lily jaguar, the monkey scribe and the *chic-chan* (sky) creature. Their names appear in adjacent short vertical texts, which include the main signs of the Emblem Glyphs for the ancient Maya cities of Tikal, Machaquilá and El Perú (or Calakmul).

Included in the lengthy hieroglyphic text around the vessel rim are the titles of the Naranjo ruler known as Lord "Flint-Face." *Also see figures 2.31, 5.21 and 5.24c.*

2. Doris J. Reents, "The Late Classic Maya Holmul Style Polychrome Pottery," Ph.D. diss., 1985, The University of Texas at Austin, pp. 80–97.

10. Cylinder Vase MS1375

Naranjo, Guatemala, c. 750–800
Ceramic with red and black on cream slip
Cabrito Cream-polychrome:Cabrito Variety
24.1 × 17.8 cm (diameter) (9½ × 7 in.)
Art Institute of Chicago, 1986.1080
Ethel T. Scarborough Fund

The hieroglyphic inscription painted around the base of this elegant vase reveals that the artist, who signed his work with his name and titles, was the son of the late-eighth-century Ruler 4 at Naranjo, known as Lord "Flint-Face," and his wife, a woman from the royal house at Yaxhá, a nearby site.[3] The diagonal texts also name the artist. The word for artist/sage, *its'at*, which concludes the artist's signature phrase, was first recognized in this text by David Stuart,[4] who also identified the toponym *Maxam* as part of the artist's signature. *Also see figures 2.28a, 2.30, 2.33, 4.20 and 5.24a.*

3. David Stuart, "Hieroglyphs on Maya Vessels," in *The Maya Vase Book*, by Justin Kerr, 1989:157.

4. Ibid.

11. Cylinder Vase K2796

Naranjo, Guatemala, c. 750–800
Ceramic with black on cream slip and remnants of stucco with postfire blue pigment
Cabrito Cream-polychrome ceramic group (but too uncommon for typological characterization)
27.5 × 10.7 cm (diameter) (10⅞ × 4¼ in.)
Anonymous Loan

Aspects of death and the underworld resonate throughout this scene of seven supernatural beings. Six deities are arranged in two groups of three each, separated by a band of death eyes.[5] The deities face a seventh figure known as God L[6] or as Lord One Death.[7] God L, who is seated on a jaguar throne, smokes his characteristic cigar. The seven supernaturals are attired in jaguar kilts and

fringed shawls as well as headdresses that contain attributes of each deity's identity. God L, for example, wears his customary *Muan Bird* headdress; in the upper register, the Jaguar Paddler is identified by his features, and GI of the Palenque Triad appears in the middle of the lower register.

The vertical text that divides God L from the other six underworld lords commences with a date of mythological significance, 4 Ahaw 8 Cumku, which is the beginning date of the cycle of time in the Maya calendar known as the Long Count. The text briefly relates that on this date the deities manifested at the "black-darkness place,"[8] a notion reinforced by the black background of the vase. The names of the six supernaturals who face God L comprise the remainder of the vertical text.

The rim text is a standard PSS statement that contains a nominal expression. *Also see figures 2.32, 5.24b and 6.1*

5. Michael Coe. *The Maya Scribe and His World*. The Grolier Club, New York, 1973, p. 107

6. Ibid.

7. Mary Ellen Gutierrez, "The Maya Ballgame as a Metaphor for Warfare." *Mexicon* 12(6):105, 1990

8. Barbara MacLeod in Linda Schele, "Notebook for the Sixteenth Maya Hieroglyphic Workshop at Texas." 1992:241

12. Cylinder Vase MS0651

Pasión River Region, Guatemala, c. 683
Ceramic with red, rose, brown, black, orange and fugitive green on cream slip [too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization]
18.1 × 12.8 cm (diameter) (7¼ × 5¼ in.)
Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies

An enthroned lord, seated on a stone bench, faces two individuals holding bouquets of flowers. The lord wears a white hipcloth, jewelry and an elaborate headdress with water lilies and a panache of quetzal feathers.[9] Red paint covers his body and white face paint surrounds his eyes. Adjacent to the lord's right knee is a cylinder painted with a pseudoglyphic text, and below his knee is a matching dish. Below his left knee is a plate containing tamales with what may be an achiote sauce dribbled over them. A large jar containing a leafy substance sits on a cloth or rope pot stand next to the standing individual. A calendric inscription, 13 Ahaw, decorates the surface of the olla.

The two individuals who face the enthroned lord also wear white face paint, and the standing figure is covered with a similar red body paint. The seated figure wears a white hipcloth, spangled headdress with an unopened water lily protruding from the front and a spondylous shell pendant, while the standing figure wears a batik-patterned hipcloth whose loincloth is adorned with pseudoglyphs.

The scene may represent a tribute payment, similar to a situation described in sixteenth-century Yucatan. In an account by Fray Alonso Ponce,[10] he relates that in the travels of the commissary, residents of Ichmul built a ramada one league away from the town where the dignitaries of Ichmul awaited the arrival of the commissary with bouquets of flowers, decorated with cacao.

Three brief hieroglyphic texts recount the historic nature of the scene and name the royal artist who painted the vessel. The primary text opens with the Calendar Round date 3 Ben 6 Kankin, which places the event at 9.12.11.9.13 (A.D. 683). The date marks a bloodletting event performed by the enthroned individual, *Ah K'awil*, whose Emblem Glyph denotes his affiliation with the Dos Pilas and Petexbatun region.

The vertical text behind the seated individual names either him or the standing figure as *K'inich Ch'ok*. The *u-nik* compound that opens the sequence refers to the flowers held by the named individual. The three-glyph text behind the enthroned figure's head is the artist's signature, and the placement of the signature implies the royal stature of the painter. *Also see figures 2.20, 2.27b, 3.4, 4.11 and 4.23*

9. Dorie Reents-Budet. "History and Ritual Events on a Petexbatun Classic Maya Polychrome Vessel." in *Fifth Palenque Round Table* 1983, edited by Virginia M. Fields, general editor Merle Greene Robertson. Vol. 7. 1985:57–63

10. Noyes, E., ed. and tr., "Fray Alonso Ponce in Yucatán, 1588." *Middle American Research Series*, Pub. 4:297–372, New Orleans

13. Royal Maya Male Figurine

Jaina Island, Campeche, Mexico, c. 600–900
Ceramic with red, white and blue slip
24.8 cm (9⅞ in.)
Collection of the Denver Art Museum 1973.184
Museum Purchase
Photograph by William O'Connor

The physical bearing, water lily headdress, clothing and jewelry are reminiscent of those worn by the men rendered on MS0651 (catalog 12). *Also see Figure 2.21.*

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

4 Drinker Vase [illegible]

Maya Lowlands, c. 672–830

[illegible] red-brown, orange black and blue on speckled yellow-[illegible]

[illegible] uncommon for typologi-[illegible]

[illegible] diameter) (4½ × 4¾ in.)

[illegible] Oaks Research Library and [illegible]ns, Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Collection B-569

[illegible] records a palace ritual, [illegible] vision quest, involving a lord [illegible] in front of a large pillow and two [illegible] A cylindrical drinking [illegible] a pseudoglyphic text around [illegible] in front of the lord. One attendant holds up a dark mirror encased in a wooden frame, while a second attendant, seated next to a bowl containing a bundle of ritual equipment, drinks from a small cup; his hipcloth is placed behind him. The inscription contains only pseudoglyphs: nothing is readable. *Also see figures 3.16 and 4.35.*

15. Mirror

Valley of Mexico, c. 1400–1521
Obsidian
11.4 cm (diameter) (4½ in.)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, M.85.233.11
Gift of Constance McCormick Fearing
Photograph by Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Materials that take a high polish, such as the iron ores magnetite and ilmenite, and the volcanic glass, obsidian, were used as mirrors throughout Mesoamerica for thousands of years. The Maya also created mirrors made of pyrite plates that were cut into polygonal shapes and fitted to circular slate disks. Mirrors have a long history in the practice of divination in Mesoamerica. This mirror, which is pierced for suspension, was probably worn around the neck. *Also see Figure 3.17a*

16. Cylinder Vase MS1389

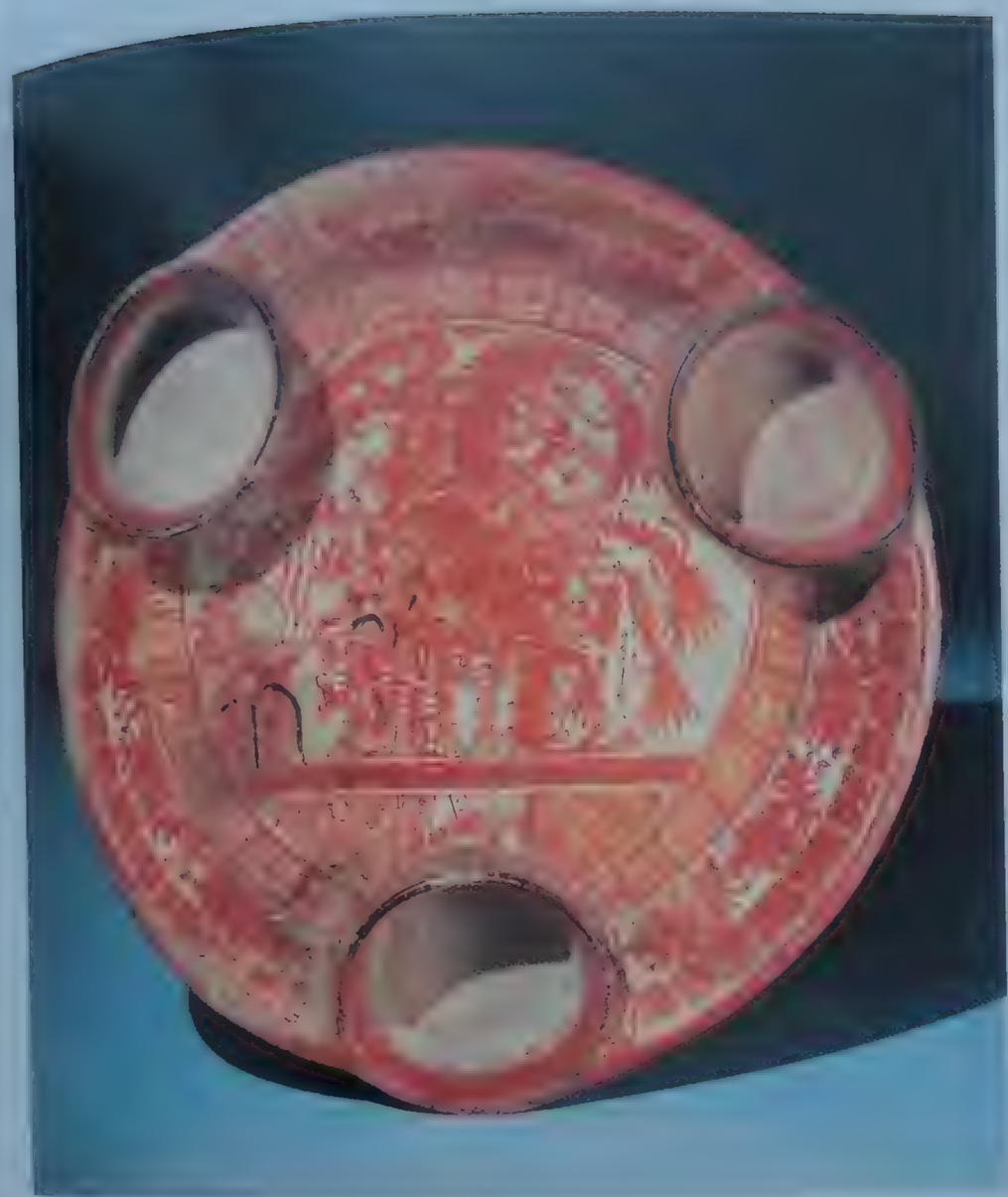
Maya Lowlands, c. 600–900
Ceramic with red, orange, fugitive green and black on white slip
Zacatel Cream-polychrome:variety unspecified
18.3 × 14 cm (diameter) (7¼ × 5½ in.)
Duke University Museum of Art, 1986.3.1
Gift of Dr. William S. Judy

A Maya lord, seated in front of his throne pillow, wears the headdress and jewelry that identify the elite. Adjacent to him is a cylinder vase that, unusually, is covered with a basketry lid. Wear patterns on the rims of many cylinder vases indicate that lids were much more common during the Classic Period than is evidenced by the archaeological record. Their paucity in the record may be due to the fact that they were constructed of such perishable materials as the woven reeds or grasses shown here. Numerous head variants are found in the text, which as yet cannot be read. *Also see figures 1.6 and 3.15a.*

17. Pendant

Maya Lowlands, c. 672–830
Jade
8.2 × 6 cm (diameter) (3¼ × 2⅜ in.)
The Art Museum, Princeton University y1972–35
Museum Purchase, gift of the Hans A and Dorothy Widenmann Foundation

The pose of the seated figure as well as his clothing and accoutrements correspond to those of the *ahaw* depicted on MS1389 (catalog 16). Both figures lean slightly to the right and wear snaggle-toothed saurian headdresses. *Also see Figure 3.15*



18. Tripod Plate MS0605

Holmul Region, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with red, orange and black on cream slip
Zacatel Cream-polychrome:Cabrito Variety
14.0 × 33.0 cm (diameter) (5½ × 13 in.)
Anonymous Loan

This plate may well have functioned for the serving of tamales or some other type of food, with the three small cups to hold different sauces. The Holmul Dancer and accompanying dwarf appear on the plate. Primarily two themes are found in this style of pottery, either the Holmul Dancer or the cormorant. This plate represents both themes: cormorants appear in a band encircling the plate between the two rows of hieroglyphs.

The text, containing more than forty hieroglyphs in the two bands, is one of the longest inscriptions known on a pottery vessel. Included in the text are two descriptions of vessel forms, *y-uch'ab* (drinking vessel) and *hawte'* (plate). The lengthy nominal phrase includes many titles for the lord for whom the plate was created. *Also see figures 3.12a, b and 5.16.*

19. Modelled Head Vessel MS0820

Baja Verapaz, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with yellow, red, cream and black slip
[too uncommon for typological characterization]
20.5 × 19.5 cm (diameter) (8⅛ × 7¾ in.)
Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquín, Guatemala City, MPV718

This unusual sculptural representation of a male visage may have functioned as a cache vessel. Although four other such sculptured vessels are known, this one is unique because of its polychrome decoration. The two-part vessel consists of a bowl representing a face from the eyes down; the upper part, from the eyebrows up, functions as a lid. The hieroglyphic text, arching over the right eyebrow, is written backwards and is as yet undeciphered. *Also see Figure 1.27.*

20. Plate MS0647

Nakbé Region, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with black on cream slip
Zacatel ceramic group:cream-ground Codex-style
4.4 × 34.5 cm (diameter) (1¾ × 13⅝ in.)
Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies

21. Cylinder Vase MS0648

Nakbé Region, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with black and red on cream slip with a light brown wash
Zacatel ceramic group:cream-ground Codex-style
13.0 × 10.4 cm (diameter) (5⅛ × 4⅛ in.)
Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies

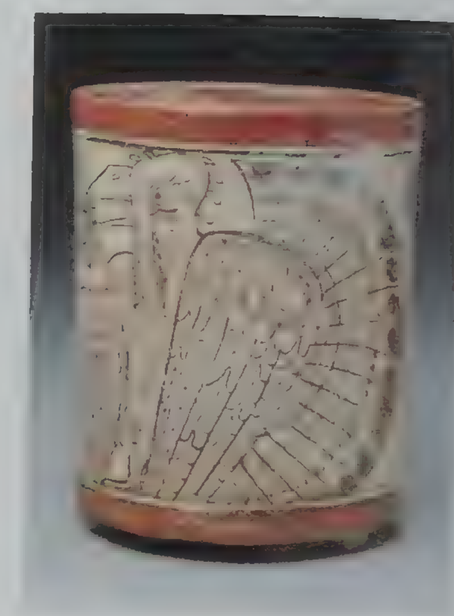
This plate and cylinder were made as a set by the same artist at the same time. The trace elemental profiles are so similar, they suggest that the vessels were made from the same ball of clay. The central image on the plate, a deity head with a *kan* cross infixed to the forehead, is also found around the rim surrounded by maize foliation. The same deity head is found on the vase. The hieroglyphic text around the rim of the plate, interspersed with the image of the prominent-toothed maize deity, dedicates the writing on the surface of the plate and includes a reference to God A-prime, a possible allusion to the owner of the plate as a deified dead person. The rim text on the vase is similar, but it relates that this drinking vessel was used for cacao food. The God A-prime title appears again in this text.

Codex-style pottery, such as these two vessels and MS1687 (catalog 1), in part was a funerary ware produced in large quantities of varying quality. Personal names usually do not appear in pottery texts on Codex-style vessels, reinforcing the notion of the "mass-produced" nature of these objects. The maize iconography found on these two vessels may also imply a funerary function for this pottery, since the cycle of maize production served as a metaphor for the Classic Maya belief in resurrection. *Also see figures 3.1, 3.8a and 4.5.*

The Art of Calligraphy: Image and Meaning

22. Vase MS1137 (*det.*)
Nakbé Region, Guatemala c. 672–830
Ceramic with red and black on cream slip with a light brown wash
Zacatel ceramic group:cream-ground Codex-style
12.6 × 12.6 cm (rim diameter) (5 × 5 in.)
Duke University Museum of Art, 1982.41.3
Gift of Mr. Hamilton C. Forman

An elegantly rendered cormorant is depicted on this vase, as well as a standard PSS text relating that this is a drinking vessel that held the ritual chocolate beverage made from fresh cacao. Then comes an *its' at* expression followed by the artist's name. The nominal phrase ends with the God A-prime title commonly used for a deceased individual, implying that the vase was created specifically for a funerary function. The vase most likely was placed in a tomb to hold the chocolate beverage offering to the deceased individual during his voyage through the underworld. *Also see Figure 4.2a.*



24

23. Plate MS0040

Naranjo, Guatemala, c. 495–593
Ceramic with red and black on orange slip
Saxche Orange-polychrome:Dzaptun Variety
9.5 × 42.0 cm (diameter) (3¾ × 16⅝ in.)
Anonymous Loan

The central motif on this large plate is the head of the Young Maize God. The unusually elaborate text includes the three most important components of the PSS: the introductory glyph and the dedicatory verb that blesses the plate, followed by glyphs that may indicate this plate was used to hold sacrificial offerings, and the name and parentage statements of the patron/owner of the plate who carries the Naranjo lineage title *sak-Chuen* ("pure artisan"). The text concludes with the name of the lord's mother. *Also see figures 3.10a, 4.1c and 4.41.*

24. Bowl MS0194

Uaxactún, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with red, orange and black on cream slip
Juleki Cream-polychrome:Juleki Variety
17 × 16.4 cm (diameter) (6¾ × 6½ in.)
Duke University Museum of Art, 1981.31.14
Gift of Mr. John B. Fulling

Both the chemical profile and the style of this vessel indicate that it was created in the vicinity of the archaeological site of Uaxactán, Guatemala. Stylistic features of this pottery include the distinctive red bands in the basal portion of the vessel, the use of black-painted hieroglyphs, black backgrounds for the glyph bands and a specific version of the PSS characterized by the use of head variants and by the presence of certain expressions. These expressions are *yich u-xubtal* or *yich ts'ib-al*, and *y-uch'ab*, both of which indicate that Cholan Mayan was the language of the area of production of this pottery style.

Vessels in the Uaxactún-style are also characterized by the absence of *-nahal* or *-nah* and by the presence of *hay* ("thin-walled") preceding the *y-uch'ab* ("his drinking vessel"). *Also see Figure 4.7.*

25. Cylinder Vase

Nakbé Region, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with black and red on cream slip
Zacatel ceramic group:cream-ground Codex-style
13.0 × 11.0 cm (diameter) (5¼ × 4⅜ in.)
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1988.1172
Gift of Landon T. Clay
Photograph courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

The peccary and turkey depicted here may represent constellations in the Maya cosmos. We think the peccary, for example, was associated with Orion rising due to its appearance in a stellar context in Room 2 of Structure 1 at Bonampak.[11]

The brief hieroglyphic text, situated between the peccary and the turkey, is written backwards and in reverse. The artist may have intended that the text be read from the inside of the vessel looking out, or a supernatural function may be implied. An *u-way* glyph introduces the phrase, a possible reference to the nature of the creatures as Maya supernatural co-essences.

11. Mary Miller. *The Murals of Bonampak*. Princeton University Press, 1986.

26. Tripod Cylinder Vase with Lid MSBV10

Santa Rita, Belize, c. 495–593
Ceramic with red-brown on cream slip
Caledonia Maroon-on-cream:variety unspecified
21.5 × 13.4 cm (with lid) (8½ × 5⅜ in.)
Department of Archaeology, Belize, 35/203–2:9

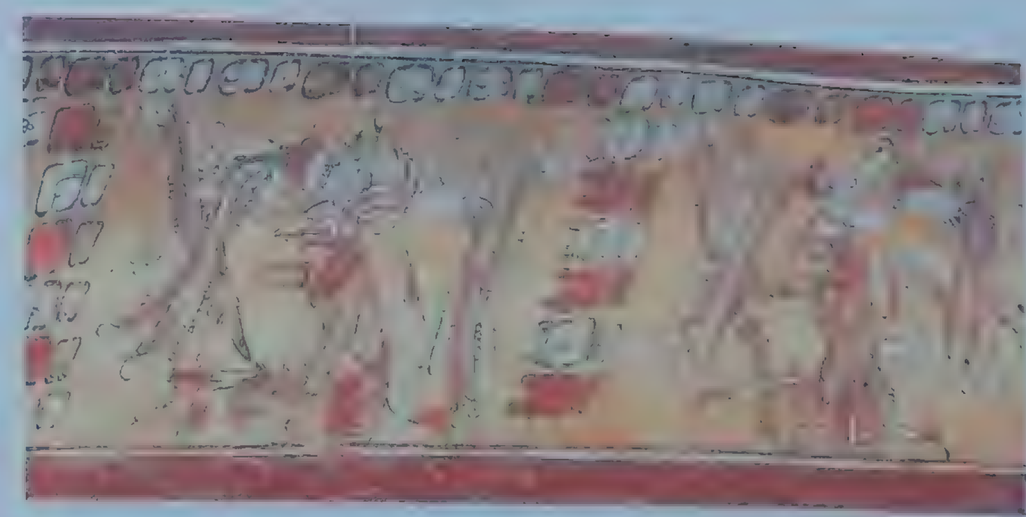
A non-PSS inscription, which is as yet undeciphered, appears on this Early Classic vessel, with the same two hieroglyphs repeated on both the body and the lid of the vessel. *Also see Figure 4.39.*

27. Cylinder Vase MS0255

Acasaguastlán Region, Middle Motagua River Valley, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with red, white and black on orange slip
Acasaguastlán Polychrome:Acasaguastlán Variety (provisional designation)
19.7 × 15.2 cm (rim diameter) (7¾ × 6 in.)
Duke University Museum of Art, 1976.73
Museum Purchase

A deerlike figure wearing a spangled headdress embellished with a water lily is depicted on this vase. The glyphic expression on this vessel represents another category of pottery texts, the so-called pseudoglyph repeat texts. The glyphs, with their highly calligraphic open forms and color alternation from red to white throughout the text, function here more as design.

A common convention of repeating pseudoglyphic texts is that the glyphs are carefully rendered, and, despite their apparent lack of meaning, the glyphs are placed correctly on the vessel surface in order to closely approximate the form of writing. *Also see Figure 4.31b*



28. Tetrapod Vase with Lid MS1638

Mundo Perdido Complex, Tikal, El Petén, Guatemala, c. 357–495
Ceramic with red and black on cream slip
Caldero Buff-polychrome:Caldero Variety
20.5 × 9.7 cm (rim diameter) (8 × 3¾ in.)
Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología, Guatemala, MNAE 11138-A, B

This Early Classic lidded vessel has four rounded legs that contain rattles and a lid with a six-dimensional avian creature serving as a handle. One of the earliest known vases with a painted hieroglyphic text that is not a PSS, the vase is adorned with six vertical columns of hieroglyphs. The hieroglyphs represent early forms of daysigns in the Mayan calendar, including unusual representations of *Ahaw* and *Imix*. The head variant form of *Imix* on this vase is also found on an Early Classic Tikal headless figure; it is more characteristic of the equivalent daysign found in the scripts of Southern Oaxaca.[12] This vase is witness to the long history of the art form of painted ceramics, and the delicate variability and the curvilinearity of the line widths of the individual glyphs attest to an equally long tradition of artistic calligraphy. *Also see Figure 4.40*

12. Edmonson, Munro S. "The Middle American Calendar Round," in *Epigraphy. Supplement to the Handbook of Middle American Indians*, edited by Victoria R. Bricker, 1992 p. 159

of the Exhibition

Formal Qualities of Maya Vase Painting

29. Cylinder Vase MS1271

Northern Petén Lowlands, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with red and black on cream slip
Zacatel Cream-polychrome:variety unspecified
20.8 × 10.5 cm (diameter) (8¼ × 4¼ in.)
Collection of the Denver Art Museum, 1972.212
Museum Purchase

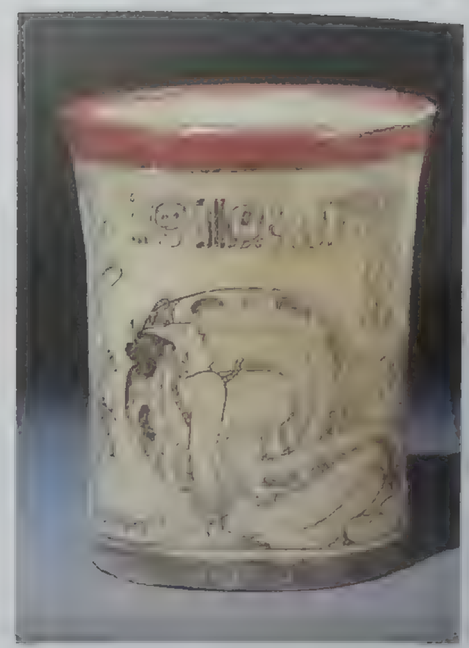
The standard approach to slip painting and pictorial composition is represented on this cylinder vase. The mineral-based pigments are manipulated within their usual palette of red, red diluted to a dark orange, white and black. The artist chose the typical compositional format for cylinder vases of a red-painted rim below which the primary hieroglyphic text is delineated within double horizontal fine black lines. The artist then divided the main body of the vase into halves comprising a front and rear face, both of which are painted with the same image—a *muan*-feathered saurian who is associated with war imagery. The artist did not attempt to imply more than a two-dimensional surface.

The rim text and the two vertical columns of hieroglyphs that separate the body of the vase are pseudoglyphs. *Also see Figure 1.2.*

30. Cylinder Vase MS1722

Nakbé Region, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with black and red on cream slip
Zacatel ceramic group:cream-ground Codex-style
16.6 × 14.7 cm (diameter) (6⅝ × 5⅞ in.)
Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies

This vase exemplifies the remarkable control of fine line painting achieved by the artists of Codex-style pottery. Line is the primary expressive element in vase painting, and this vase illustrates the extraordinary brush control that created both delicate and bold outlines. Compositionally, the artist implies three dimensions through the use of overlapping figural images. With this implied dimensionality, the blank white background shifts from a flat two-dimensional field to a three-dimensional void.



In this scene, the serpent foot of the deity *K'awil*, who is characterized by the smoking celt and mirror in his forehead, wraps around the voluptuous body of a young woman. The serpent foot terminates in the rearing head of a long-snouted supernatural, from whose open jaws emerges the aged deity God N.

Although there are three brief hieroglyphic texts, none reflects the format and content of the PSS. The primary text opens with a Calendar Round date, 13 Muluc 17 Pax, documenting a birth (an undoubtedly mythological event) and closes with a nominal phrase consisting of a *vax-chak* head, an *u-ahaw* vulture head and an *ah-k'u* ("holy one"). The text opposite *K'awil*'s forehead reads *e-nal (?), ah-much-i, yal*, followed by *na-tsak, k'o-bal chan* (the name of the Vision Serpent) *u-way. Also see Figure 1.3.*

31. Dish with Lid MS1262

Petén Lowlands, Guatemala, c. 495–593
Ceramic with red, orange, black and fugitive green on cream slip
Dos Arroyos ceramic group; undesignated red-polychrome type
Dish: 14.3 × 36.3 cm (diameter) (5¾ × 14⅜ in.)
Lid: 17.5 × 37.6 cm (diameter) (7 × 14⅞ in.)
Collection of the Denver Art Museum, 1983.363a, b
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Luben

The primary image adorning the lid of this vessel is either that of the Young Maize God or of an ancestor. The figure is bordered by a band of chevrons and a band of water imagery encircling the knob, and a Venus sign appears on the knob. The dish itself is decorated with an elaborate geometric representation of the Early Classic jawless saurian. This vessel illustrates the artist's manipulation of a single background paint color on the vase's two-dimensional surface to imply a three-dimensional void. The overlapping brush strokes in the background red paint give depth to the ground, which in turn creates the illusion that the face is floating in a red void. The background red wash abuts the human visage, creating the facial profile and obviating the need for a strong outline; that is, the artist juxtaposes color to create the image. *Also see Figure 1.7.*

32. Cylinder Vase MS1521

Northern Petén Lowlands, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with red, orange, black and fugitive green on cream slip
Cabrito Cream-polychrome:Cabrito Variety
22.0 × 9.2 cm (diameter) (8¾ × 3¾ in.)
Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies

A seated human figure embellished with brilliant body paint adorns the surface of the vessel. The artist plays with this feature by dribbling paint down the figure's thigh, accentuating the liquid nature of his paint.

The vase combines all the pictorial conventions and paint manipulation seen in the preceding three vessels and also illustrates the artist's unrestrained application of infilling colors. These allow the viewer to see the individual brush strokes made by the painter.

The vessel, which was made in a workshop located in the same region as MS1271 (catalog 29), has a comparable pseudoglyph or repetition of Initial Sign text separated from the upper rim by double horizontal fine black lines. *Also see figures 1.5 and 4.30b.*

33. Cylinder Vase MS1525

Eastern Central Petén, Guatemala, c. 593–672

Ceramic with red, rose and black on cream slip

Zacatel Cream-polychrome:Panela Variety

28.2 × 17.8 cm (diameter) (11⅛ × 7 in.)

Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina, 83.172.51

Gift of Mr. Andrew A. Lanyi

An elaborate image of the deity GI, or *Chak Xib Chak*, fills the surface of this vase. The vase exemplifies the extraordinary technical accomplishments of pottery painters in manipulating inherently opaque slip paints to achieve a transparent color wash. The artist here fills in the image with an unusual pink wash that has all the transparency and delicacy of watercolor painting. This remarkable technical achievement in low-fire ceramic painting is unequaled anywhere and anytime in world art traditions.

The PSS contains a death head for the dedication verb, which is characteristic of vessels deriving from the border area between Belize and Guatemala. A *chak ch'ok* ("great lineage member") expression also occurs in the PSS. The two diagonal texts restate the opening phrase of the PSS (*ay-a huyi u-ts'ib-nahal chak-lal*). *Also see Figure 1.9.*

34. Dish MS0804

Chamá Region, Highland Guatemala, c. 672–830

Ceramic with red and black on cream slip

Chamá Polychrome:cream-slipped variety (provisional designation)

14.0 × 22.5 cm (diameter) (5⅝ × 8⅞ in.)

Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquín, Guatemala City, MPV0141

This dish and the following one (MS0673, catalog 35) illustrate two different approaches to geometric design that are based on abstractions of the hieroglyph *k'in*, the word for day. On this vessel, the artist used the *k'in* sign as the primary single motif that covers the vase. He then employed its flowerlike form as the unifying design principle for the overall composition.

The characteristic Chamá-style chevron bands adorn the borders of the vessel. *Also see Figure 1.15.*

35. Bowl MS0673

North Central Petén, Guatemala, c. 672–830

Ceramic with red and black on cream slip

Zacatel Cream-polychrome:Zacatel Variety

8.1 × 21.9 cm (diameter) (3¼ × 8¾ in.)

Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies

A single line of *k'in* signs here alternates with what may be abstract floral motifs. *Also see Figure 1.16.*

36. Tripod Plate MS0086

Central Petén, Guatemala, c. 672–830

Ceramic with red and black on cream slip

Zacatel Cream-polychrome:Zacatel Variety

11.0 × 31.2 cm (diameter) (4⅜ × 12⅜ in.)

Anonymous Loan

The artist's sparse use of the design motif makes this an unusual plate. The motif is found in Maya art as part of the skyband, a series of icons associated with the sky. Three signs form a triad on the interior bottom of the plate, forming a possible reference to the "Three Stone Place" of Maya cosmology, located in the Milky Way, the place where the creation of the world began. *Also see Figure 1.17.*

37. Cylinder Vase MS1268

Uaxactún Region, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with red, orange and black on yellow-cream slip
Paixban Buff-polychrome:variety unspecified
29.5 × 16.8 cm (diameter) (11¾ × 6⅝ in.)
Collection of the Denver Art Museum, 1983.405
Anonymous Gift

The body of this cylinder is painted with a complex textile design that includes both loom-woven and hand-plaited techniques. On the cream underslip, the artist painted stripes in an orange wash, conveying the notion of layers of cloth. Such elaborately decorated textiles are worn by women whose images are carved on the stone monuments at Yaxchilán. *Also see Figure 1.12.*

38. Cylinder Vase MS0165

North Central Petén, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with black on white slip
Zacatel Cream-polychrome:Zacatel Variety
12.7 × 13.2 cm (rim diameter) (5 × 5¼ in.)
Duke University Museum of Art, 1978.37.3
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond A. Biagiotti

The exterior of this low cylinder vase is painted in stark black on white paint, replicating designs commonly found on baskets. This vase apparently recreates in ceramic a woven reed basket. Although basketry rarely survives in the archaeological record, depictions of baskets are shown on monumental relief sculpture at Yaxchilán and are painted on pottery. *Also see Figure 1.11.*

39. Cylinder Vase MS1370

Western Belize, c. 672–830
Ceramic with red and orange on cream slip
Rojizo Red-brown-on-buff:Rojizo Variety
16.5 × 10.1 cm (diameter) (6½ × 4 in.)
Duke University Museum of Art, 1979.56.7
Gift of Ms. Elizabeth H. Brown

Painted to resemble a jaguar pelt, this vase may have served as a drinking cup. Jaguars are closely associated with Maya rulership. Their pelts covered stone thrones and were stuffed to create back cushions for thrones, and elite individuals are often depicted wearing jaguar kilts, headdresses and other items of apparel. On this vase, the artist included the *k'in* (day, sun) sign in the center of the large spots, a reference to the *K'in Balam*, an important supernatural being of the Maya Underworld. *Also see Figure 1.13.*

40. Cylinder Vase MS0445

Motul de San José Region, Guatemala, c. 672–830

Ceramic with red, rose, orange, white, brown and black on cream slip

[too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization]

20.2 × 16.4 cm (diameter) (8 × 6½ in.)

Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collections, Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Collection B-564

An explicit account of a royal ritual taking place in a palace is recorded on this vase. The palace interior is painted with depictions of jaguar deities and watery quatrefoils holding the skeletal image of a death god. The six assembled participants are rendered naturalistically with careful attention to such figural details as hands and feet. Although a degree of stylization is present, each figure differs slightly in details of the eyes, the shape of the nose and the curve of lips and chin, suggesting portraiture.

Although the vase's pictorial composition appears to be a continuous scene, two separate scenes emerge if the painting is examined as a two-dimensional creation. The artist employs similarities in body painting, headdresses, jewelry, body position and architectural frameworks to separate the composition into two parts. In one scene, a lord sitting on a long bench leans toward a pair of noblemen while an attendant holds an object out to him. Two lidded cylinder vases are placed on the throne behind the lord, and what may be a ballgame yoke arches over them. A plate or basket sits in front of the throne on the palace floor. In the other scene, two figures, one of whom is depicted almost exactly like the lord in the larger scene, face each other in conversation.

The hieroglyphic text offers epigraphic reasons to include this cylinder vase in the corpus of *Ik'* area ceramics, including the presence of the *Ik'* Emblem Glyph. Characteristic *Ik'* area patterns also appear, especially the use of the Flat-Hand ("was presented") glyphic compound and of *u-xubal*, an expression that replaces *u-ts'ib* ("its painting/writing").

Two brief texts behind the ruler's back describe the painting (*u-ts'ib*) and the finishing (or polishing; *u-yul*) of the vessel and end with the artist's name. *Also see figures 3.20a, 4.44, 5.12 and 6.33.*

41. Cylinder Vase [illegible]

[illegible] Rabinal [illegible]

[illegible] orange, pink and black [illegible]

[illegible] uncommon for typology [illegible]

[illegible] cm (diameter) (4¼ × 2½ in.)

Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología, Guatemala, MNAE 9967

Two seated women, dressed in wraparound dresses and with their hair neatly trimmed and bound, face a cross-legged male figure wearing a jaguar skin loincloth. The three appear to be gesturing toward the tripod plate between them, which may contain strips of cloth or paper upon which is dripped a sacrificial blood offering.

The hieroglyphic text is minimal; vertical texts next to the women simply name them. An *u-bah* verbal expression appears in the main text, but the remaining text is too eroded to identify. *Also see figures 1.25, 3.9a and 4.42.*

42. Seated Female Figurine

Jaina Island, Campeche, Mexico, c. 672–830

Ceramic with white and blue paint

18.8 × 7.8 cm (diameter) (7½ × 3⅛ in.)

Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies

This figurine of a female, who is seated cross-legged and gestures with her left hand, wears a wraparound dress and ornate turban. Her hair is cut in the stepped design characteristic of Late Classic Period elite women, and tattoos adorn her cheeks and chin. *Also see* [illegible]

43. Cylinder Vase MS0159

Maya Lowlands, c. 600–900
Ceramic with red and black on yellow-on-cream slip
Acasaguastlán Polychrome:Acasaguastlán Variety (provisional designation)
19.0 × 14.6 cm (rim diameter) (7½ × 5¾ in.)
Duke University Museum of Art, 1978.41.1
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. H. A. Ferrari

The male figure seen on this vessel exemplifies the kind of stylized depiction of the human figure frequently seen in Maya art. The dancer, dressed in elite finery and wearing an elaborate backrack, is rendered with delicate facial profile and hands. He also strikes a stylized dancing pose, characterized by the straightened arms, extended fingers, and leg slightly bent in midstep.

The lack of text and the nature of the figure characterize a regional version of the Holmul Dancer theme in a technically fine but compositionally poor manner. *Also see Figure 1.23.*

44. Cylinder Vase MSBV70

Blue Creek Cave, Hokeb Ha, Belize, c. 750–800
Ceramic with red, rose, orange, brown, white and black on yellow-cream slip [too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization]
21.0 cm
Department of Archaeology, Belize, 28/179–5:7

Two seated lords, apparently engaged in conversation, are depicted on this vase. One figure's body has been stylized to adapt to the curved surface of the vessel, and the enlarged shoulders give the figure added stature. Of particular note in the painting is the artist's use of translucent slips to vary the figure's skin tone, which gives the figure added visual weight.

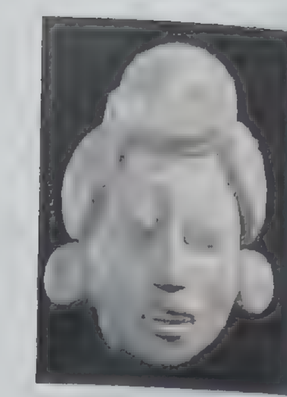
Between the figures are four large hieroglyphs that are neither part of the Primary Standard Sequence nor do they appear to be nominal. *Also see Figure 1.18.*

45. Footed Vase MS1138

Quintana Roo, Mexico, c. 550–593
Ceramic with red and black on cream slip
Yaloche Cream-polychrome:Fulano Variety
12.0 × 10.1 cm (diameter) (4¾ × 4 in.)
Duke University Museum of Art, 1985.21.13
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond A. Biagiotti

Representing the high degree of stylization available to Maya artists, the figure here is abstracted to fit into the narrow vertical and wide horizontal space of this small round-sided vase. In the process of abstracting the figure, however, the artist maintained all the characteristic elements of formal Maya canons, such as showing the image in profile view and placing the hieroglyphic text below the rim of the vessel. The figure, which is repeated three times, wears the characteristic headdress and costume elements associated with depictions of the elite, and his hand is extended in a typical symbolic gesture.

The hieroglyphic text approximates writing in a regional cursive convention associated with this area. *Also see figures 1.26 and 4.34c.*



46. Stucco Human Head

Maya Lowlands, c. 600–900
Stucco with traces of red and green paint
30.3 × 26 × 17.7 cm (12 × 10¼ × 7 in.)
Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies

47. Stucco Human Head

Maya Lowlands, c. 600–900
Stucco with pink, ocher and brown paint
28.6 × 18.9 cm (11¼ × 7½ in.)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, [illegible]
Lent by Constance McCormick Fearing
Photograph by Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Sculpted portrait heads, such as catalog items 46 and 47, occasionally adorned the facades of buildings. Details of elite costume appear here, including large circular earflares, which were once painted green. The forehead is crowned with a circular diadem. *Also see Figure 1.22.*

Painting Styles and Workshop Locations

48. Cylinder Vase MS1373

Motul de San José Region, Guatemala, c. 765–780

Ceramic with orange, red, brown, black and white on cream slip

[too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization]

17.1 × 14.3 cm (diameter) (6¾ × 5⅝ in.)

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 394.1985

Anonymous Loan

Photograph courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Three vases (catalog items 48, 49 and 50) represent three of the painting styles associated with the pottery workshops found at *Ik'* Emblem Glyph sites. The geographical extent of the *Ik'* Emblem Glyph political region is presently unknown; only one site, Motul de San José, has carved stone monuments. Scores of vessels are known from this area, however, which share attributes of a distinctive style with minor stylistic variations. The chemical variability and similarity of the vessels to those produced in this area, and the fact that many royal people are named on the vessels, permits the geographic identification of an *Ik'* regional polity.

The scene painted on this vessel records a tribute payment by a secondary lord to the primary ruler of the region, who is

shown seated on a mat-covered bench. Swag curtains define the interior space, and a lidded cylinder and a basin are seen beside the bench.

Based on hieroglyphic and ethnohistoric evidence, the scene may be interpreted as one in which a lord receives tribute. Dennis Tedlock[13] notes that in the *Popol Vuh*, the two highest Quiché royal titles translate as "Keeper of the Mat" and "Keeper of the Reception House Mat," a title borne by the overseer of tribute. The hieroglyphic text around the rim describes the vessel as one that contained a drink made from fresh cacao, a drink consumed during the ceremony of accepting tribute. The rim text also names the enthroned lord (Lord Completion-Star), his father and their dynastic affiliation with the *Ik'* site. The text surrounding the tribute-paying lord names him and describes the action of making payment.

Characterizing the *Ik'* site tradition is the rare substitution for the Wing-Quincunx, consisting of a *naab* mainsign and a *ch'a* superfix, with the typical *yu* prefix. The resulting word (*y-uch'naab*) translates as "his thing for drinking." Other traits typical of *Ik'* sites include the "curl-skull" form of *huy-i* ("was blessed"), a *-ba-nahal* sequence after the word for writing, and the preposition *ti* before *y-utal* and *tsih te'el*. The use of *ti* in this context suggests that these speakers of Chol had a long interaction with a Yucatecan language. *Also see figures 3.21, 4.17, 5.9 and 5.11a.*

13. Dennis Tedlock. *Popol Vuh*. Simon and Schuster, New York, 1985, p. 54

49. Cylinder Vase MS1419

Motul de San José Region, Guatemala, c. late eighth century

Ceramic with red, orange, rose, pink and black on cream

[too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization]

22.3 × 13.0 cm (diameter) (8⅞ × 5¼ in.)

Collection of Joan Rapp

Characteristic of one of the styles of the Motul de San José Region is the use of dark rose pigment diluted to pink and used to paint the hieroglyphic texts. The text on this vessel is not a Primary Standard Sequence, another characteristic of this style, but rather is historical.

Two scenes are depicted here, each featuring a primary figure and an attendant. In one scene the main figure, known as the "Fat Cacique," holds a rattle, and the text records a dance event and names him with a Sun God title and as a ruling member of the *Ik'* site polity. The other scene describes the primary figure as undergoing the autosacrificial rite of penis perforation. *Also see figures 5.5 and 5.6*

50. Cylinder Vase MS0334

Motul de San José Region, Guatemala, c. late eighth century

Ceramic with red, orange, maroon, pink brown, fugitive green and black on cream slip

[too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization]

12.6 × 10.9 cm (rim diameter) (5 × 4.5 in.)

Duke University Museum of Art, 1080.5.2

Gift of Mr. Andrew A. Lanyi

A seated figure with a large bar pectoral faces three others in a scene that well illustrates *Ik'* regional conventions. Twelve rulers are portrayed on the three *Ik'* polity vessels (catalog items 48, 49 and 50) and are named in the hieroglyphic texts, which also describe the depicted events. The figures, identifiable by portrait and inscription, share a number of features characterizing the style produced by artists of the *Ik'* Emblem Glyph polity. These include exceptionally pendulous noses and lower lips, stern expressions, elegantly rendered hands and intricately tied coiffures.

The hieroglyphic text on this example is too eroded to read fully, but it apparently records a historic event that took place within the *Ik'* polity, as indicated by the presence of the Emblem Glyph. A portion of the text records the act of dancing: *u-bah ti ahk'ot ti (?)* ("he goes to dance with as (?)") and vertical texts record the title *ahaw* ("lord"). *Also see figures 4.43 and 5.13.*

51. Cylinder Vase MS1127

Holmul Region, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with red and orange on cream slip
Cabrito Cream-polychrome:Cabrito Variety
24.7 × 15.8 cm (rim diameter) (9¾ × 6¼ in.)
Duke University Museum of Art, 1982.43
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond A. Biagiotti

The Holmul-style is illustrated by two vases, catalog items 50 and 51. The style is named for the archaeological site of Holmul, located in eastern Guatemala, where similar vases were first excavated archaeologically in 1911. Scores of vessels have since appeared, which are painted in a similar palette and with the same image of a dancing lord wearing an elaborate backrack. The variability in the depictions of the dancers, the degree of elaborateness of their costumes and the hand-writing differences noted in the hieroglyphic texts suggest that many workshops from many sites in one region were creating vessels in this style. The chemical variability within the Holmul-style corpus corroborates this hypothesis and confirms the locations of the workshops in sites surrounding Holmul.

The dancer depicted on this vase is unusual because he is shown in total profile. Typically, Holmul dancing figures are presented with frontal bodies and profile heads. Another distinctive characteristic of this particular dancer is the highly animated and exaggerated sense of his movement.

The Primary Standard Sequence around the vessel rim records the usual information. The vertical text, however, which normally names the characters in the dancer's backrack, is pseudoglyphic in nature. *Also see figures 5.23 and 5.55.*

52. Cylinder Vase MS0038

Naranjo Region, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with red and orange on cream slip
Cabrito Cream-polychrome:Cabrito Variety
24.0 × 13.3 cm (diameter) (9½ × 5¼ in.)
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 401.1985
Anonymous Loan
Photograph courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

The chemical data provide evidence that this vessel was made in the vicinity of Naranjo, possibly at the site itself. The Primary Standard Sequence relates a variant example of the expected text, and the vertical texts are possibly pseudoglyphs. *Also see figures 5.18 and 5.19.*

53. Dwarf Figurine Whistle

Maya Lowlands, c. 600–900
Ceramic
11.0 cm (4⅜ in.)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, AC1992.134.20
Gift of Constance McCormick Fearing
Photograph by Los Angeles County Museum of Art

54. Dwarf Figurine Whistle with Bird Headdress

Maya Lowlands, c. 600–900
Ceramic with red and white pigment
9.7 cm (3⅞ in.)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, AC1992.134.21
Gift of Constance McCormick Fearing
Photograph by Los Angeles County Museum of Art

55. Dwarf Figurine Whistle

Maya Lowlands, c. 600–900
Ceramic with white and blue pigment
9.1 cm (3⅝ in.)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, AC1992.134.22
Gift of Constance McCormick Fearing
Photograph by Los Angeles County Museum of Art

These three mold-made dwarf figurines resemble those attending the dancers depicted on the Holmul-style vases, sharing the same scant clothing, fine strings of large jade beads, earflares and elaborate headdresses. Dwarves, who are commonly depicted in the company of the elite, evidently held special status in Maya society.

56. Cylinder Vase MS0253

Altun Ha Region, northern Belize, c. 650–750
Ceramic with red, orange, black and brown on cream slip
Petkanche Orange-polychrome:Petkanche Variety
19.9 × 13.0 cm (rim diameter) (8¼ × 5⅛ in.)
Duke University Museum of Art, 1986.2.10
Gift of Mr. Frank Ball

The Altun Ha-style, represented by MS0253 and MSC091 (catalog 56 and 57), is named for the site in central Belize where archaeologists have recovered the majority of vessels painted in this style. The style is distinctive not only for the black backgrounds but also for the unusually colorful head variant hieroglyphs of the PSS texts painted on these vessels. These PSS texts may include Yucatec Mayan signs, suggesting that Yucatecan was spoken here during the Classic Period. These vases may provide us with the first evidence of Yucatec Mayan being spoken so far south of its traditional area, the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico.

This vessel, which is extremely thin, shows extensive wear on the rim, suggesting either extensive use or that the vessel once had a lid.

The primary image on the vessel depicts a Teotihuacan-style butterfly with water lilies attached to it. The butterfly rests on a *wits*, the Maya icon for mountain. *Also see Figure 5.41.*

57. The Quetzal Vase MSC091

Altun Ha Region, northern Belize, c. 650–750
Ceramic with red, orange, black and brown on cream slip
Petkanche Orange-polychrome:Petkanche Variety
18.4 × 14.9 cm (diameter) (7⅜ × 6 in.)
Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, 97-44-20-C211
Photograph courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College; Photograph by Hillel Burger

Although created in the area around Altun Ha, this vessel was found in a tomb in the center of a plaza of an elite residential compound at Copán, Honduras providing direct evidence for long distance trade or gift exchange of high-status goods. Many sherds from Copan have been identified chemically as deriving from the region around central and western Belize and eastern Guatemala.

Tomb 2, where this vessel was found is a single chamber burial of well-built

masonry with a corbel vault. The tomb contained four ceramic vessels, jadeite [illegible]rnaments and animal bones.[14] [illegible]s are depicted on both sides of the vessel, which is chemically similar to MS0253 (catalog 56). A water lily blossom appears on the ground line of the vessel on one side.

The PSS is a standard Altun Ha version of the sequence, containing an unusual verbal suffix after the *ts'ib* expression. *Also see figures 3.24 and 5.41.*

14. Longyear, John M. III. *Copan Ceramics: A Study of Southeastern Maya Pottery*. Carnegie Institution of Washington, Pub. No. 597:41–42.

58. Tripod Plate MS1438

Tikal Region, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with red and black on cream slip
Palmar Orange-polychrome:variety unspecified
11.5 × 33.0 cm (diameter) (4⅝ × 13⅛ in.)
Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina, 83.172.25
Gift of Mr. Andrew A. Lanyi

Representing the Tikal Dancer plate-style are MS1438 and MS0657 (catalog 58 and 59). This style group is characterized by the image of a dancing male figure who always is depicted wearing an elaborate feathered backrack. His clothing and headdress identify him as the Young Maize God, in whose guise the soul of a deceased person dances out of the underworld after defeating the Lords of Death. This image is standard fare for funerary vessels, implying that the many plates created in this style were made to be placed in tombs. In addition, the plates have so-called kill holes, thought to free the spirits of the plates or perhaps to release their power.

Scholars previously believed that the plates came from the city of Tikal, because many were found in tombs at that site. Their definitive stylistic and chemical variability, however, indicate that the Dancer Plate-style characterizes the creativity of workshops located at many sites within the greater Tikal region.

The hieroglyphic inscription is a sequence of day names in the Maya calendar, a unique example in the Tikal Dancer plate corpus. *Also see figures 5.35 and 5.36*

59. Tripod Plate MS0657

Tikal Region, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with red and black on cream slip
Palmar Orange-polychrome:variety unspecified
9.3 × 34.5 cm (diameter) (3¾ × 13⅝ in.)
Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies

Characteristic of the dancer plates from Tikal is that the rim area is divided in half, and elaborate hieroglyphic compounds decorate one half. This text combines head variants, geometric style hieroglyphs and bar and dot numerals as a framing mechanism, but it cannot presently be read.

The so-called kill hole through the center of the plate may imply the ritual killing of the vessel to free its spirit. *Also see Figure 5.39.*

5[illegible]

60. Cylinder Vase MS0250

Chamá Region, Guatemala Highlands, c. 672–830

Ceramic with red, orange, black and brown on cream slip

Chamá Polychrome:orange-slipped variety (provisional designation)

14.0 × 15.5 cm (rim diameter) (5½ × 6⅛ in.)

Duke University Museum of Art 1976.77 Museum Purchase

The name for the Chamá-style (catalog 60 and 61) derives from the archaeological site where the style was first encountered. Unlike the Dancer Plates, there is little stylistic diversity among the objects in the Chamá group, although their chemical variability suggests that numerous workshops in the vicinity of Chamá were creating these vessels.

Chamá-style traits include an orange background featuring a single image in abundant pictorial space. Many Chamá vessels show scenes derived from the *Popol Vuh*. This vessel, for example, depicts the *Camazotz'*, the vampire bat who acted as messenger for the Lords of the Underworld.

The brief hieroglyphic text repeats the expression *u-k'at* ("his clay object"). *Also see figures 4.32b, 5.31 and 6.2.*

61. Cylinder Vase MS0245

Chamá Region, Guatemala Highlands, c. 600–900

Ceramic with red, orange, black and brown on cream slip

Chamá Polychrome:orange-slipped variety (provisional designation)

21.5 × 12.6 cm (diameter) (8½ × 5 in.)

Duke University Museum of Art 1976.76 Museum Purchase

A procession of three animal musicians is shown on this vessel. The same three characters are depicted in all representations of this otherworldly orchestra, which includes a rabbit playing a turtle drum, an armadillo playing a drum covered with jaguar skin and an unidentified animal on the maracas. *Also see Figure 5.32.*

62. Drummer Figurine

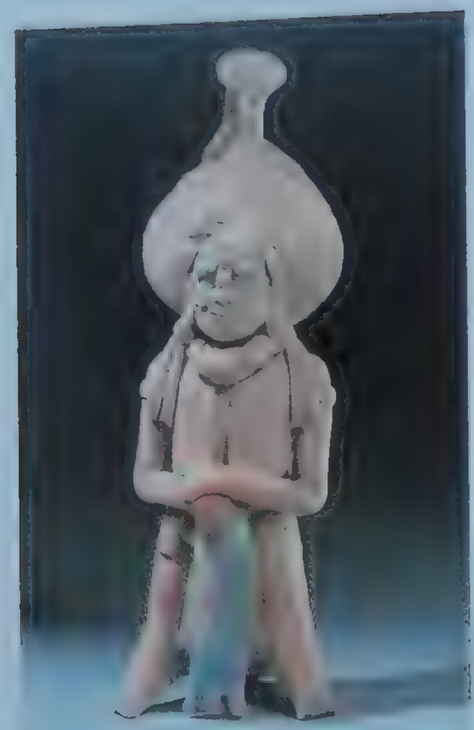
Jaina Island, Campeche, Mexico, c. 600–900

Ceramic with blue pigment

21.0 × 10.5 cm (diameter) (8⅜ × 4¼ in.)

Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies

This figurine of a Mayan drummer wears a ceremonial costume consisting of elaborate scarves and headdress. He plays a tall wooden drum known as a *pax*. The Spanish described similar instruments played in highland Mexico, known as *tlalpanhuehuetl*.



63. Tripod Plate MS1425
Northern Campeche, Mexico, c. 593–731
Ceramic with red and black on orange slip
Cui Orange-polychrome:variety unspecified
10.7 × 37.2 cm (diameter) (4¼ × 14¾ in.)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, M.90.168.13
Gift of the Art Museum Council in honor of the museum's twenty-fifth anniversary

The imagery painted on these plates, which were produced in workshops in Campeche, Mexico, is that of the mythological *muan* bird, who was the messenger of the Lords of the Underworld. The *muan* bird appears related to the turkey vulture, giving rise to the style name of Turkey Vulture plates. The inner rims of these plates are painted with the image of the earth monster. Some plates show this saurian floating in the black waters of the underworld, suggesting that these plates were created primarily as objects to be placed in tombs. Many plates, however, have surface abrasions caused by heavy usage, while others have kill holes, as seen with the Dancer Plates. The evidence implies that Turkey Vulture plates were used prior to death, but that they were also considered appropriate funerary objects.

The stylistic and chemical variability among the large number of known Turkey Vulture plates locates the respective workshops in the region north of the site of Edzná, including Dzibilnocac, Santa Rosa Xtampak, Jaina Island and Acanceh. Plates of this style, called Cui Orange-polychrome in the nomenclature of Maya ceramic typology, were archaeologically excavated at these sites, and others were apparently traded to sites as far away as Becán, nearly one hundred miles southeast of Edzná. *Also see Figure 5.28.*

64. Tripod Plate K4321
Northern Campeche, Mexico, c. 593–731
Ceramic with red and black on orange slip
Cui Orange-polychrome:variety unspecified
10.2 × 36.2 cm (diameter) (4 × 14¼ in.)
Anonymous Loan

Pictorial Themes in Maya Vase Painting: The Natural Environment

65. Bowl MS1516

East Central Petén, Guatemala, c. 593–672

Ceramic with red, orange and black on yellow-cream slip (interior); red and yellow on white slip (exterior)

Possibly Calderitas Orange-polychrome: variety unspecified

16.2 × 15.4 cm (diameter) (6½ × 6⅛ in.)

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66. Bowl MS0661

East Central Petén, Guatemala, c. 593–672

Ceramic with red, orange and black on yellow-cream slip (interior); red and yellow on white slip (exterior)

Possibly Calderitas Orange-polychrome: variety unspecified

16.2 × 15.4 cm (diameter) (6½ × 6⅛ in.)

Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies

Seemingly created as a pair, these two bowls (MS1516 and MS0661, catalog 65 and 66) are painted on both interior and exterior surfaces with images from the rainforest's animal world. A procession of squawking parrots adorns the exterior surfaces of the bowls, while on the interior surfaces large fat fish swim through water lilies. Water lilies are a common feature of the ponds and slow-moving rivers in the Petén lowlands of Guatemala and Belize, which were abundantly stocked with a variety of freshwater fish.

The bowls were undoubtedly created at the same time and as a set, given their common imagery and size. These bowls, however, were painted by two different artists whose individual styles can be recognized in their different approaches to rendering the fish and the water lilies. The chemical similarity of the bowls implies that they were created by the same potter(s), while the evidence of the imagery suggests that the two painters were employed in the same workshop. *Also see Figure 6.9*

67. Tripod Bowl with Lid MS0053

Uaxactún Region, Guatemala, c. 495–593
Ceramic with red slip
Iapon Resist:Iapon Variety
25.5 × 20.5 cm (diameter) (10⅛ × 8⅛ in.)
Anonymous Loan

The body and lid of the vessel are embellished with stylized geometric renditions of frogs swimming in water. The water is represented by the lines of dots and circles surrounding the toads. A sculpted spotted turtle forms the knob on the vase's lid.

The painting technique of the surface decoration is known as *negative resist*. In this technique, which is similar to batik painting on cloth, the completed ceramic vessel was covered with red slip paint. The frogs and water symbols were then painted over the slip with a liquid resist material, such as wax. The vessel was fired in a slightly reduced atmosphere that allowed carbon to build up in the atmosphere surrounding the vessel. The carbon was absorbed into the surface of the vessel in those areas not protected by the resist material, blackening the surface. The protected painted images remained red and became visible against the darkened background. This technique, which is prevalent in the late Pre-Classic and Early Classic periods, decreases in usage in the lowlands as polychrome painting becomes the dominant mode of pottery decoration in the Late Classic period. The use of resist painting, however, continues in the highlands. *Also see Figure 6.10.*

70. Cylinder Vase MS1426

Cobán Region, Alta Verapaz, Guatemala, c. 672–830

Ceramic with red and black on cream slip [too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization]

17.0 × 25.2 cm (diameter) (6 ¾ × 10 in.)

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, M.90.168.18

Gift of the Art Museum Council in honor of the museum's twenty-fifth anniversary

Repeated motifs that are actually stylized profile bat heads comprise the striking design painted in black on this vessel's cream surface. Bats are important characters in Maya mythology, and the bat is a frequent motif of the pottery painters from the Alta Verapaz and Baja Verapaz regions of southern Guatemala. The chemical profile of this vessel places it firmly in the ceramic workshop traditions in the region of the Alta Verapaz. *Also see Figure 6.3*

71. Bowl MS0606

Holmul Region, Guatemala, c. 672–830

Ceramic with red and orange on cream

Cabrito Cream-polychrome:Cabrito Variety

11.0 × 13.0 cm (diameter) (4 ⅜ × 5 ⅛ in.)

Anonymous Loan

This low cylinder vase portrays a cormorant, a frequently encountered inhabitant of marshy areas and bodies of water in the Maya Lowlands. The cormorant is rendered here in an uncommon painterly fashion through the artist's deft manipulation of the translucent slip paint to create a transparent wash and by his elegant curvilinear lines, which reveal the artist's individual brush strokes.

The PSS relates that this was a vessel for *ul*, the Maya expression for *atole*, a corn gruel.

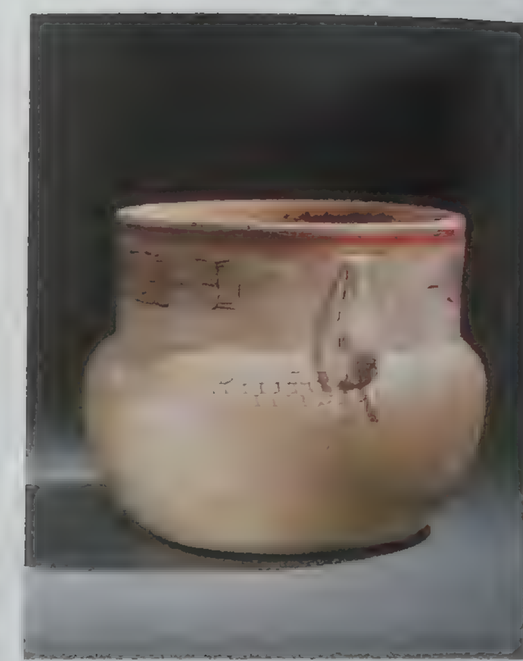
The chemical data indicate that the vessel was created at a site in the vicinity of Holmul. *Also see figures 5.22 and 6.12*

68. Tripod Plate MS0663

Maya Lowlands, c. 600–900
Ceramic with red and black on orange slip
Palmar Orange-polychrome:variety unspecified
12.4 × 33.9 cm (diameter) (5 × 13⅜ in.)
Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies

The image of a jaguar, the most prevalent symbol of power among the Classic Maya, is painted on the interior bottom of this plate. Rulers commonly depict themselves sitting on jaguar skin thrones, reclining against jaguar-skin-covered pillows and wearing jaguar kilts. Here the jaguar holds a decapitated human head, reflecting this animal's ritual role in the esoteric sacrificial rites that, according to Maya religious belief, sustained the universe.

Muan bird feathers adorn the exterior surface of the plate. The feathers of the Muan bird appear in association with Tlaloc war imagery and sacrifice by decapitation. *Also see Figure 6.21.*



69

69. Jar

Upper Motagua River Valley, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with red and black on cream slip
[too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization]
22.9 × 20.3 cm (diameter) (9 × 8 in.)
Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies

When you invert this jar, it becomes the body of an armadillo, whose sculpted and carved body curls around the body of the vessel from rim to rim. The armadillo was first sculpted onto the surface of the vessel, which was then painted a creamy white color. The armadillo's scales were then incised into the vessel's surface before it completely dried; the darker clay of the vase creates the outlines of each scale. Armadillos are found throughout the Maya region today and are also popular in pre-Columbian mythology and modern tales.

Pseudohieroglyphs are painted around the collar of the jar. A tradition of painting hieroglyphic-like signs on pottery extends from the region around Nebaj through the Salamá Valley into the Upper Motagua River area. *Also see Figure 6.17.*

hands resting on his shoulders is a symbolic gesture of submission in Maya art. This prisoner was undoubtedly an important and royal person given his prominence on these vases: his quetzal-feather headdress and the fact that he is named in the large hieroglyphic text in front of his face. The ruler is also named in a secondary text, which is placed behind the throne back.

Two attendants hold armloads of batik print cloth, and two bundles of cloth rest beside the throne, perhaps indicating the bounty of war or a tribute offering.

The rss, which contains a long nominal phrase, comprising nearly half of the inscription, also contains a reference to the vessel contents as "tree-fresh cacao." The opening sequence of five hieroglyphs from the rss phrase is repeated in a vertical column that defines the architectural space. *Also see figures 4.15 and 6.25.*

The Historical Realm: Palace Scenes

72. Barrel-shaped Cylinder Vase MS0054
Petén Lowlands, Guatemala, c. 600–900
Ceramic with red, orange, white, gray/green and black on yellow-cream slip
[too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization]
24.5 × 14.3 cm (diameter) (9¾ × 5¾ in.)
Anonymous Loan

A meeting between two *ahawob*, or lords, is recorded on this vase. One lord is seated upon a litter, and his litter bearer stands behind him. The second lord is seated on his throne bench, which is carpeted with jaguar skin. This ruler gestures in the course of his conversation, while a female attendant kneels behind him and holds a fan or banner. Swag curtains and the roof of the palace room arch over the scene as a third figure overlooks the setting, peeking in from behind the throne.

Three other vases exhibiting similar characteristics are known, suggesting they derive from the same area and possibly from the same workshop. The vessels produced in this workshop are characterized by a distinctive yellowish background, a prolific use of white slip paint, which colors the clothing worn by the figures, and the presence of a gray color employed most commonly to render headdress feathers and ornamental backracks. Since these feathers are most likely from the quetzal, which produces brilliant iridescent green feathers, the gray slip paint was undoubtedly green when it was first applied. Subject to the fading seen on this vessel, a stable green has been the most difficult pigment to achieve by artists across the world.

The standard PSS text uses the Flat Hand glyph compound "was presented" rather than the more common God N dedication verb. The text notes that the vessel was used for fresh cacao; secondary texts contain nominal information.
Also see figures 4.2b and 6.23.

73. Cylinder Vase MS1118
San Agustín Acasaguastlán Region, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with red, orange, pink and black on cream slip
[too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization]
16.3 × 14.8 cm (diameter) (6½ × 5⅞ in.)
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1988.1170
Gift of Landon T. Clay
Photograph courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

One of five known vases [illegible] master artist, all five vases [illegible] cal events surrounding the [illegible] presentation of prisoners of war. [illegible] vessel, the prisoner kneels before [illegible] enthroned ruler, who wears a sp[illegible] headdress with water lilies, and [illegible] restraining him is held by an a[illegible] standing behind him. [illegible] text, the person who s[illegible] attendant is the one [illegible] ture. The prisoner's [illegible]

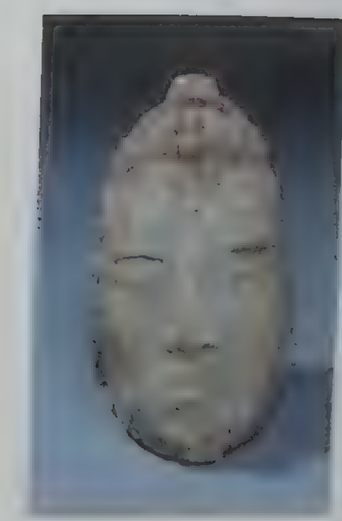
74. Earflares

Maya Lowlands, c. 600–900
Jadeite
8 cm (diameter) × 3 cm (thick) each
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, M.71.73.325, M.71.73.326
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Phil Berg
Photograph by Los Angeles County Museum of Art

75. Necklace (reconstructed)

Maya Lowlands, c. 600–900
Jadeite
40.5 cm (length) (16 in.); 53 beads ranging from 2 cm to 10 cm in length (¾–4 in.)
Duke University Museum of Art, 1981.4.2a
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Francis Robicsek
Photograph by Butch Usery

Jadeite, an exceptionally hard stone, is the jewel of the elite among most peoples of Mesoamerica. Many characters depicted on Maya pottery are bedecked in jadeite earflares, large beaded necklaces, anklets and bracelets. Rulers especially wear much jadeite jewelry, their necklaces hung with great bar pectorals or with pendants carved to represent a deity head or *ahaw* face (see catalog 76). Some elite figures are also shown wearing long, thin jadeite beads hanging from their nasal septums. *Also see figures 6.28 and 6.30*



76. Carved Pendant Head

Maya Lowlands, c. 600–900
Alabaster and red pigment
6.3 × 3.4 × 2.9 cm (2½ × 1⅜ × 1¼ in.)
Duke University Museum of Art, 1986.8.13
Gift of Mrs. Ivan Hart
Photograph by Butch Usery

Carved pendants, such as this unusual alabaster example, are common central elements in the beaded necklaces worn by elite Maya. The pendant is a three-dimensional idealized portrait of an *ahaw* or ruler, his noble status indicated by the flower motif embellishing the head band. *Also see Figure 6.31*

77a. Carved Shell Disks

Maya Lowlands, c. 250–450
Shell and red pigment
8.9 cm (height) each (3½ in.)
The Denver Art Museum, 1979.0175a and b
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Huber

b. Carved Profile Faces

Maya Lowlands, ca. 450–650
Shell and reg pigment
4.5 cm (height) each (1¾ in.)
Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies

These delicately carved shells once formed the inlay of jadeite earflares. The shells depict kneeling captives whose elite status is indicated by their personal adornment and two profile heads that may represent deities. *Also see Figure 6.29*

78. Mosaic Mask, Belt Plaques and Bar Bead

Cahal Pech, Belize, c. 830–889
Jadeite and shell
Mask: 28 × 13 cm (11⅛ × 5⅛ in.)
Belt plaques: 17.5 × 7.5 × .5 cm (7 × 3 × ¼ in.); 17.8 × 7 × .6 cm (7 1/16 × 2¾ × ¼ in.); 17.8 × 7.2 × .5 cm (7 1/16 × 2⅞ × ¼ in.)
Bar bead: 13.9 × 2 (5½ × ¾ in.)
Department of Archaeology, Belize
27/189-3:60 (mask); 27/189-3:25, 26, 27 (plaques); 27/189-3-24 (bar bead)

The elaborate waist assemblages worn by formally dressed Maya elites often contained a belt head mask from which hung three jadeite plaques. The belt head mask often depicted a feline, especially the jaguar, whose character was closely associated with royal authority. Others, such as this one, personify the notion of *ahaw*, the highest office a Maya ruler could hold. The large bar bead was suspended around the ruler's neck as part of his splendid array of jadeite beads and pectorals.

The belt head mosaic mask, pendant plaques and large pectoral bar bead formed part of a burial assemblage of "crown jewels," which also included a pair of jadeite earflares and nine ceramic vessels. This royal burial from Cahal Pech dates to late Tepeu II or early Tepeu III times. Excavation of this important burial was a nighttime rescue operation by the Department of Archaeology of Belize in 1969 to save it from looters who had discovered the tomb. *Also see Figure*

Sport and the Ritualized Ballgame

79. Plate MS1523

Eastern Campeche or Quintana Roo, Mexico, c. 672–830
Ceramic with red and black on light orange slip
Saxche Orange-polychrome:Saxche Variety
8.6 × 36.5 cm (diameter) (3½ × 14½ in.)
Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies

A deer hunt is depicted on the interior surface of this plate. The artist portrayed the action of the hunt by placing the four hunters in a pattern radiating out from the center of the plate. The plate's compact and complicated images, plus the lack of any straight lines, further adds to the impression of animated movement.

In the center of the plate is painted a deer whose flaccid legs suggest that he has been killed. Two other captured deer are carried over the shoulders of two hunters. The other two huntsmen carry nets and blow conch shell trumpets. The death of the deer is further implied by three carrion birds hovering above the action.

Most pottery depictions of hunters show them wearing black body paint. Conceivably, in pre-Columbian times hunting took place at night, as it does today among rural Maya, and the ancient hunters used dark paint as camouflage.

The use of sand temper implies that the vessel was created in Quintana Roo. *Also see Figure 6.35.*

80. Ballgame Vase MS1526

Motul de San José Region, c. 600–800
Ceramic with red, orange, black and cream on cream slip
Juleki ceramic group:undesignated reserve-ground type
20.5 × 15.9 (diameter) (8⅛ × 6⅜ in.)
Dallas Museum of Art, 1983.148
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Nasher

Four elegantly garbed ballplayers are shown in the course of play on this vessel. The two figures flanking the architectural element wear water lily headdresses, while the two ballplayers standing on either side of the vertical text wear animal headdresses, a deer head and bird head. Their protective clothing consists of deer hide kilts with thick padded waist protectors, known as yokes. The player positioned on one knee in order to strike the ball with his yoke may be the owner/patron of the vase *Sac-Muan* of the *Ik'* site.

The rim text consists of a standard PSS composition. Following the "tree-fresh cacao" phrase is a God A-prime title, implying that the patron or owner may be deceased. A ballplayer title occurs as part of the nominal sequence and the owner/patron's name appears at the end of the vertical text. *Also see Figure 6.36.*

81. Ballplayer Figurine

Guatemala Highlands, c. 600–900
Ceramic with white slip
17.8 cm (7¼ in.)
Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies

The protective padding of a ballplayer covers this figurine/whistle, who also wears a deer headdress. *Also see Figure 6.39.*

Death and the Afterlife

82. Cylinder Vase MS0740

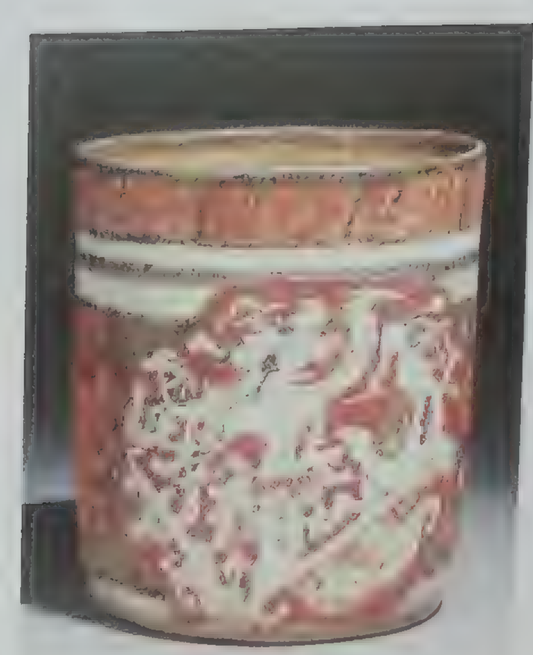
Holmul Region, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with red, orange, rose and black on cream slip
Palmar ceramic group (possibly Paixban Buff-polychrome:undesignated special variety
22.7 × 10.3 cm (diameter) (9 × 4⅛ in.)
Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquín, Guatemala City, MPV0368

The imagery on this vase recounts the afterlife journey to the watery underworld by a Maya lord, who is seated in the center of a canoe. In this two-part scene, the artist visually refers to both the journey into the underworld and the soul's defeat of death and its eventual resurrection. The Paddler Twins occupy the bow and stern of the canoe, their paddles dipping into the inky waters.

The defeat of the Lords of Death, who rule the underworld, is evoked by the scene painted below the canoe. This scene refers to the final acts recounted in the *Popol Vuh*, the Maya creation myth. The Hero Twins trick the Lords of Death into believing that the twins have been destroyed by the Lords, who ground up the bones of the Twins and threw them into the river of the underworld. Yet the Hero Twins miraculously came back to life, reappearing as fish men. The artist recalls this account by painting a young lord with a fish. The lord's identity is intentionally ambiguous: he is both one of the Hero Twins and he is the soul of the man depicted in the canoe.

The final part of the afterlife journey is represented in the second scene on the vase. Two nude women dress the man in the guise of the Young Maize God in whose image he will be resurrected. The Classic Maya used the process of the reappearance of corn in the milpa each spring as the metaphor for the human soul's resurrection from the underworld after defeating the Lords of Death.

The PSS is rendered in head variant form. Although the Tikal Emblem Glyph is found in the text, the chemical data appear to indicate that the vessel was made in the Holmul region. *Also see Figure 6.46.*



83. Cylinder Vase MS0158

Eastern Central Petén, Guatemala, c. 593–672

Ceramic with red, orange, maroon and black on white slip

Zacatel Cream-polychrome:Panela Variety

19.0 x 16.5 cm (rim diameter) (7½ × 6½ in.)

Duke University Museum of Art, 1976.93 Museum Purchase

On this vase, the Paddler Twins stand in a personified canoe, which is tipped as its enters the underworld. The entrance to the netherworld is implied by the dark red quatrefoil which frames each representation of the Twins, one on each side of the vase. Unique to this vase is the black spotted white dog with a water lily on its head, who sits in the stern of one of the canoes. According to highland Mexican myth, a dog accompanies the soul into the underworld in order to guide the soul through this dark and dangerous realm.

The text, which appears to be primarily head variants, may comprise a list of deity names.

This vessel is chemically similar to the Naranjo Area Group vessels associated with Ruler 1 at Naranjo. *Also see Figure 6.47.*

84. Cylinder Vase MS0075

Petén Lowlands, c. 672–830

Ceramic with red, orange and black on yellow-cream slip

Saxche Orange-polychrome:Saxche Variety (or Palmar Orange-polychrome: Zacatel Variety)

21.0 × 9.0 cm (diameter) (8⅜ × 3⅝ in.)

Anonymous Loan

A major blood sacrifice by three individuals and the accompanying dance by one of the participants is recounted on this vase. The autosacrifice is not recorded but is expressed by the blood-spattered clothing of the participants. The dancing individual is represented in an unusually animated pose. He wears a full head mask of a skeletal saurian whose appendages are also covered by spots of blood. The same zoomorph is the main icon on MS0160 (catalog 85).

One of the two flanking participants sits on a large curled scorpion's tail, and the third participant, an unidentified supernatural, sits on a pile of three stones. These may reflect constellations in the Maya night sky: the Three Stone Place is where the gods first created the universe by separating the sky from the earth, and the scorpion is the constellation Scorpio at the south end of the north-south axis.

Undifferentiated pseudoglyphs are painted around the rim of the vessel. *Also see Figure 6.41.*

85. Cylinder Vase MS0160

Petén Lowlands, c. 672–830

Ceramic with red, orange, maroon and black on cream slip

Zacatel Cream-polychrome:Panela Variety

19.3 × 10.1 cm (diameter) (7⅝ × 4 in.)

Duke University Museum of Art, 1986.11.6

Gift of James and Ruby Seals; Seals and Crofts

The image of a rare supernatural skeletal zoomorph is depicted on this vase. The head of the zoomorph is attached to a diagonal strip of entwined water lily stems. Although its identity remains uncertain, this creature is related to blood sacrifice in some way given its appearance as a full head mask on MS0075 (catalog 84), whose scene portrays a sacrificial ritual. In addition, the skeletal zoomorph here is bedecked with blood-spattered feathery ornamentation. Blood sacrifice is also implied by the dark red background color of the vase, which evokes the impression that the zoomorph is floating in a sea of blood.

The glyphic sequence simply repeats a single motif, an elaborate version of the PSS introductory glyph. *Also see Figure 6.43.*

86. Dish MS0739

North Central Petén, Guatemala, c. 672–830

Ceramic with red, orange, rose and black on cream slip

[too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization]

10.8 × 27.8 cm (diameter) (4¼ × 11 in.)

Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquin, Guatemala City, MPV0420

The sequence of figures depicted on this vessel is one of the most remarkable parades of humans and supernaturals engaged in different kinds of ritual activity. The sequence opens with a portrait rendition of the hieroglyph for *ahaw*, here expressed as a calendrical daysign. The following eight characters, some rendered as supernatural zoomorphs and others as humans in supernatural situations, are intimately tied to vision-quest rituals found throughout Maya art. With the exception of the first supernatural animal (the *muan* bird), all are named in short hieroglyphic texts painted next to each figure. These texts each include the glyph for *way*, conveying the Maya belief in the existence of co-essences, or *nahuales*. By recounting pictorially and hieroglyphically seven different supernaturals who functioned as *way* counterparts, this vessel provides the single most extensive information about this esoteric and important component of Classic Maya spiritual belief.

The first zoomorph, the *muan* bird, is the avian messenger of the Lords of the Underworld. Here it perches on a throne made of human femurs. The second figure is a human female holding a sacrificed infant laid in a wide-lipped plate. The remains of infant sacrifices associated with similar plates are known from Petroglyph Cave in Belize. The image from this vessel is one of only two such representations from the Classic Period that enable the interpretation of such archaeological remains.

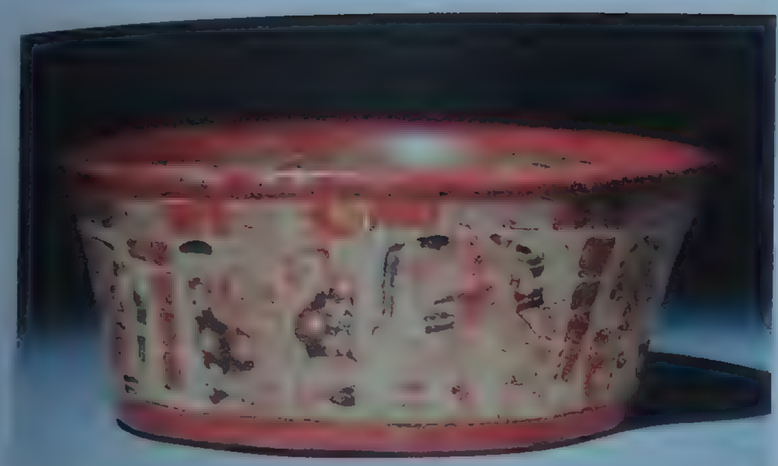


Figure is a dancing skeletal supernatural who wears bulbous cloth or paper body adornments covered with spots of blood, and who carries a large rectangular object on his back. This same rare costume is also worn by the sixth figure. The fourth figure is the frequently depicted water lily jaguar supernatural, who reclines on the same throne of human femurs upon which the *muan* bird perches.

The fifth figure is a crouching human dressed in the guise of *Camazotz'*, the supernatural bat of the underworld who tricked the Hero Twins in the House of Darkness. *Camazotz'* is characterized by black wings embellished with disembodied eyes and crossed bones, which the figure wears like a cape.

The sixth figure depicts a human being in the act of self-decapitation. He wears the same costume and backrack as the dancing skeletal supernatural. The water lily jaguar appears again with both the seventh and eighth figures. The seventh character, a squatting female, holds a short pole in front of her on which the water lily jaguar is climbing. The female wears the scarf commonly seen on the water lily jaguar, who also appears as her headdress. The final figure is a dancing water lily jaguar who holds the implements required for the vision-quest ritual, an enema bag and the jar which contains the hallucinatory liquid to be ingested. The water lily jaguar appears to be a costume worn by a skeletal character, whose unfleshed arm and leg bones are revealed where the costume is cut away.

The PSS contains a lengthy patron section as well as the artist's signature. Stylistically, the hieroglyphs resemble those from the El Zotz' area; sherds with chemically similar profiles to this vessel derive from the Lake Petén Itzá region. *Also see figures 3.9b and 6.44.*

87. Figurine of a Man Undergoing Transformation

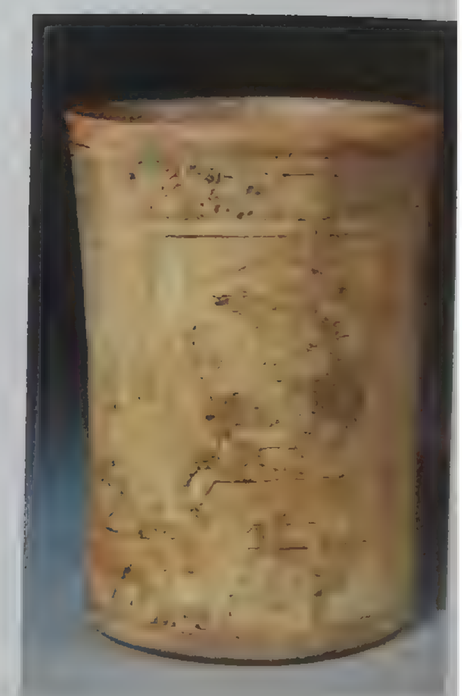
Jaina Island, Yucatan, Mexico, c. 593–889
Ceramic with blue pigment
10.4 cm (4¼ in.)
The Art Museum, Princeton University, L.1988.147
Lent by Gillett G. Griffin

This figurine/whistle is a rare three-dimensional depiction of the transformation of a human into his supernatural other. The human, who is a dwarf, is portrayed on one side of the figurine, while his back is sculpted in the form of his *way*, a small rodentlike animal. *Also see Figure 6.45.*

The Supernatural Realm: Images from the Popol Vuh

Catalog 89 (detail)

88



88. Cylinder Vase MS1126

Central Campeche (?), Mexico c. 593–830
Ceramic with red, white and black on yellow-cream slip
[too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization]
20.0 × 17.0 cm (diameter) (8 × 6¾ in.)
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1988.1169
Gift of Landon T. Clay
Photograph courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

The first meeting between the Hero Twins, named *Hunahpu* and *Xbalanque*, and *Itzamná*, the primary Lord of the Underworld, is narrated on this vase. The artist, who painted the vase in an unusual yellow and orange palette, was equally creative in his use of enlarged head variant hieroglyphs. The text includes the names of the Hero Twins, which appear directly above their images, and the text also states that the vase was a drinking vessel for tree-fresh cacao pulp. The final hieroglyph in the vertical text is *tsak ahaw*, a reference to an offering, which here is in the basket in front of Itzamná. The PSS in the vertical texts consists of a dedication of the offering rather than of the vessel itself. *Also see figures 1.10, 4.9 and 6.52.*

89. The Princeton Vase MS1404

Nakbé Region, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with red, black and brown on yellow-cream slip
Palmar ceramic group:orange-ground Codex-style
21.5 × 16.6 cm (diameter)
The Art Museum, Princeton University, y1975–17
Museum Purchase, gift of the Hans and Dorothy Widenmann Foundation

An elegantly painted scene from the Maya Underworld adorns the surface of this Codex-style vase, originally described by Michael Coe in *The Maya Scribe and His World*. God L, seated on a bench inside a structure, presides over the action. He is attended by five young women, one of whom turns toward the event occurring behind her. Here, the Hero Twins, disguised as dancers, demonstrate their skill at death and resurrection for the Lords of the Underworld. A rabbit scribe records the proceedings in a jaguar-skin-covered codex.

An abbreviated PSS, located around the rim of the vessel, states that the vase was used for the drinking of tree-fresh cacao. A nominal phrase, including *muan bird* and quetzal head glyphs, concludes the sequence. The secondary text contains a Calendar Round date, 8 Cabán 5 Ceh, which Linda Schele and Mary Miller (1986) suggest may be linked with the first appearance of Venus as Evening Star. *Also see figures 2.4 and 2.26b.*

90. Cylinder Vase MS1392

Chamá Valley Region, Guatemala, c. 672–830

Ceramic with red, orange, black and brown on cream slip

Chamá Polychrome:orange-slipped variety (provisional designation)

14.6 × 19.0 cm (rim diameter) (5¾ × 7½ in.)

Duke University Museum of Art, 1976.74

Museum Purchase

The final moments of the *Popol Vuh* are recounted here, when *Hunahpu* sacrificed God N, pulling him from his protective shell. This sacrifice defeated the Lords of Death and allowed the Hero Twins to escape from the underworld with the bones of their murdered father. This final act is the Maya metaphor for resurrection of the human soul after death.

The abbreviated PSS refers to the dedication of the vessel. *Also see figures 4.10 (34a and 6.50)*

91. Bowl with Lid MS0249

Alta Verapaz, Guatemala Highlands, c. 495–593

Ceramic with red, black and brown on cream slip

(too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization)

26.9 × 15.5 cm (diameter) (10⅝ × 6⅛ in.)

Duke University Museum of Art, 1980.5.4a, b

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Francis Robicsek

An idiosyncratic version of the PSS is recorded on this uncommon bowl and sculpted lid. The knob of the lid represents a three-dimensional version of either God A-prime or the spotted *ahaw* Headband Twin, who are both associated with sacrifice, death and the underworld.

The text states that the vessel was used to contain cacao. *Also see Figure 6.57*

92. Tripod Plate MS0240
Central Peten Region, Guatemala, c. 672–830
Ceramic with red and black on cream slip
Saxche Orange-polychrome:Saxche Variety
7.0 × 31.7 cm (diameter) (2¾ × 12½ in.)
Duke University Museum of Art, 1978.40
Gift of Mr. Robert O. Law III

A supernatural feathered fish, whose skin is that of a boa constrictor, is painted on the surface of this plate. This particular zoomorph is known from a few vases. On one such vase, *Hunahpu*, or his father, *Hun Hunahpu*, spears this ichthyoid creature, suggesting that this zoomorph pertains to a portion of the *Popol Vuh* that has not survived.

The Flat Hand compound ("was presented") appears here in the PSS, rather than the more usual God N dedication verb. The text also states that the vessel is a plate that was used to hold tree-fresh cacao (the pulp of the cacao fruit). *Also see Figure 6.54.*

93. Cylinder Vase MS0060
East Central Petén Region, Guatemala, c. 600–900
Ceramic with orange and black on cream slip
Chantuori Black-on-orange:pre-slip incised variety
32.5 × 16.5 cm (diameter) (12⅞ × 6⅝ in.)
Anonymous Loan

Uncommon for its abundance of rarely seen supernaturals, this vase is also unusual for its combination of incised and painted imagery in black and orange. Each figure is flanked by vertical texts that are both incised and painted, which should name the supernaturals, but which appear to be pseudoglyphic in nature.

The supernaturals who float in the upper register of the vessel include 1) an aged deity with a skeletal head and fleshed body; 2) an aged being who carries a conch shell trumpet and wears a Jester God headdress; 3) a bloated anthropomorph with a water lily plant and blossom on the back of his loincloth and a headdress with a jaguar who itself wears a cut shell diadem on his forehead; and 4) a kneeling anthropomorph who holds a shell trumpet to his mouth, and who is placed in front of a cormorant standing on a zoomorphic water lily. In the lower register appears 5) a kneeling, bloated anthropomorphic figure who holds a staff, and who has a distinctive trumpet-shaped mouth and a zoomorphic headdress; 6) a seated figure with the triple-knotted headdress of sacrifice, who holds a hafted axe and circular *cauac* blade and who has performed the act of self-decapitation—his head sits in a bowl that rests on his shoulders; 7) a smoking anthropomorph who floats on his back above an altar marked with crossbones—his heart has been removed, and dots of blood emerge from his chest; and 8) a seated anthropomorphic deer, who appears with a shield above his stomach with four disembodied eyes. A double register of black incised lines and a thronelike device forms the bottom frame of the composition.

A PSS is incised around the rim of the vase. The inscription appears as curvilinear as if it had been painted, because the artist manipulated his incising tool as if it were a paint brush. The text, which relates that the vessel was used for cacao, contains a nominal sequence. *Also see Figure 6.58*

Catalog 94 (detail)

94. Cylinder Vase MS1684

Naranjo, Guatemala, early eighth century
Ceramic with red and orange on cream slip
Cabrito Cream-polychrome:Cabrito Variety
22.9 × 9 cm (width) (9¼ × 3⅝ in.)
Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies

Decorating the surface of the vase are images of cormorants standing above water symbols. This vessel and the following Buenavista Vase (MS1416, catalog 95) reveal strong similarities in color, use of pictorial space, and the details of line, suggesting that both were painted by the same master artist.

Concluding the text of the PSS is the name of Lord *Itsam Balam*, a ruler from the site of Ucanal, located some thirty-five kilometers south of Naranjo. *Also see figures 6.13 and 7.7.*

95. The Buenavista Vase MS1416

Buenavista del Cayo, Belize, early eighth century
Ceramic with red and orange on cream slip with blue rims
Zacatel Cream-polychrome:variety unspecified
29.7 × 12.3 cm (diameter) (11¾ × 4⅞ in.)
Department of Archaeology, Belize, 27/189-9

Two elaborately dressed young lords, who have defeated the Lords of Death and have danced their way out of the underworld, adorn the surface of this vessel. Although similar to vessels excavated at Holmul in eastern Guatemala, this vase was found in the burial of a young man at Buenavista del Cayo, Belize. The hieroglyphic text around the rim reveals that the vase was made to contain fresh cacao, and that it was created for Lord *K'ak'-Til*, formerly known as Lord Smoking Tapir, who ruled at Naranjo, near the eastern border of Guatemala. The chemical profile of the vessel suggests that it may have been made in the vicinity of Naranjo.

A carved stone monument, Stela 22 from Naranjo, provides the clue that links the history of these three sites. The monument's text relates that Lord *K'ak'-Til* defeated the lord of Ucanal in battle on September 7, 698. Lord *K'ak'-Til*'s royal artist made the Buenavista Vase, and Lord *K'ak'-Til* subsequently gave the vessel to the ruler of Buenavista, perhaps as a funerary gift for the burial of the ruler's young son or more likely as part of his campaign to bring Buenavista under his control.

The iconographic program painted on the vessel surface, while adhering to the Holmul Dancer theme, presents unusual variations on the theme. The figures face to the right rather than to the left, as is the norm, and the scene lacks both dwarves and secondary vertical texts.

The PSS text, which describes the vessel as a container for cacao food, concludes with the nominal sequence for the vase's patron Lord *K'ak'-Til*, naming him as a holy lord of Naranjo. *Also see figures 3.25, 4.1b, 4.21, 5.26a, 5.27, 7.3 and 7.4.*

Appendix I

Type:Variety Analysis and Masterworks of Classic Maya Polychrome Pottery

by Joseph W. Ball

The purpose of this appendix is to provide an accurate and reliable type:variety classification of the vessels included in the catalog section of this book. Typologies are meant to serve a variety of purposes for archaeologists and others who make use of them because sound typologies formalize similarities and differences, they facilitate comparisons and they enable temporal and spatial assignments. Correct typologies also can elucidate a wide range of relationships among individual objects and groups of objects. However, to accomplish effectively these ends a typology must be soundly formulated and carefully applied.

The analytical realm represented by pre-Conquest lowland Maya ceramic studies traditionally has been characterized by some of the most rigorously formulated and meticulously employed typologies to be found within the discipline of scientific archaeology. Most unfortunately, however, the same care and precision generally has not been extended to typological classifications of what today are recognized as the "masterworks" of the Classic Period Maya ceramic industry, whether illicitly looted or archaeologically recovered. Standard procedure in exhibition catalogs, art books, and numerous popular works generally labels any cream-ground Late Classic polychrome vessel as "Zacatel Cream-polychrome" (or Zacatal Cream-polychrome) and any orange-ground Late Classic pieces as "Saxche/Palmar Orange-polychrome"—the latter often with a coda to the effect that "they can't be told apart." In fact, they can.

The result has been the unsystematic assignment of a hodgepodge of types, groups, and wares to what have become a few essentially meaningless categories in order to "scientize" and presumably to legitimatize these artworks. Simple ignorance and laziness also have played their part in these efforts. The final effect of these erroneous assignments has been the implication of a series of distributions, relationships and production-circulation zones that bear no resemblance to any social, historical, economic or artistic reality. In this process, not only has much genuine information been submerged but spurious "data" have been created.

Accurate ceramic typological assignments assist in establishing the likely production-areas of even unprovenienced vessels. In the case of legitimately recovered pieces (that is those scientifically excavated and recorded under professional archaeological supervision and with formal government authorization) they make significant contributions to our knowledge of Classic Period interaction patterns and zones of ceramic distribution and circulation.

In contrast, incorrect identifications not only erroneously attribute vessels and styles to the wrong production zones but also distort and confuse our understanding of ancient ceramic distribution patterns and sociopolitical interactions. In short, incorrect typological identifications have a profoundly negative effect on our ability to describe and understand Classic Maya economic, social and political systems and cultural history patterns—not merely Maya art history. This is true of legally recovered, provenienced masterworks as it is of the unprovenienced, illicit looted booty that tragically comprises the bulk of private and institutional art collections today.

In making my identifications for the present study I either examined each vessel personally or made use of multiple, high quality color photographs in the case of those not physically available for handling. The same cautions and meticulous attention given sherds and vessels recovered [illegible]

[illegible] believe the [illegible] classifi- [illegible] seconds [illegible] Why examine [illegible] using the lasso [illegible]

[illegible] is most direct [illegible] these vessels [illegible] logical context, [illegible] useful and [illegible] historical context. Cor- [illegible] vessels—and that [illegible] they are not as much as [illegible] ciates them with the broken [illegible] the architectural centers, the [illegible] and the residential set- [illegible] patterns that are the stuff of Maya archae- [illegible] Maya history at the regional level. [illegible] classifications, chemical [illegible] studies and stylistic analyses will [illegible] to the [illegible] local provenience and con- [illegible] pieces—nor will these investi- [illegible] the phenomenal wealth of context- [illegible] information that is completely and forever [illegible] from objects not scientifically recovered. Nonetheless, correct classification does identify a [illegible] probable production zone for each "typed" vessel and so helps identify spheres of distribu- [illegible] and circulation. As is illustrated clearly by [illegible] Bunny Vase" excavated from Buenavista del [illegible] Belize (MS1216; see Chapter 7), a vessel's [illegible] logical classification is a function of its pro- [illegible] and in no way necessarily reflects its [illegible] depositional site or even region. The "Quet- [illegible] Vase" from Copan (MSC091; catalog 57)—[illegible] chemically demonstrated to be a product of the [illegible] Northern Belize coastal zone—provides another [illegible] documentation of this fact. The bottom line is that out of context unprovenienced vessels can not provide that much information; yet they do hold some usefulness in cultural studies. These vessels should be exploited, not scorned.

I have already touched on the importance of accurate and correct classifications, but let me return to this matter briefly. Incorrect identifications ascribe vessels, styles and even whole traditions or schools to the wrong localities and regions. In direct consequence, distributions and thus patterns of circulation and interaction are hopelessly distorted for the non-specialist (non-ceramicist) scholar examining economic, social, political and other subjects presumably reflected in archaeological distributions and patterns. Incorrect identifications obscure the information produced by chemical characterizations and style analyses. Recognizing this fact, I have not assigned every vessel represented in this study to an established ceramic type or group. Many simply cannot be so assigned, and these ought not to be forced into such categories simply for "neatness" or to create some pretense of "scientific" order.

Occasionally a masterwork vessel superficially may resemble an established ceramic type or group due to either its proper place in another similar, but as yet not formally isolated and defined, ceramic group or to its execution by an artist of such superlative talent that his creations fall beyond the parameters of the vast mass of wares upon which analytical typologies are based and which they customarily are used to describe. As R. E. W. Adams (1971:34–35) pointed out some years ago in writing on the "Altar Vase," it is not only extremely difficult but in some cases represents an analytical error to force certain extremely fine ceramic pieces into established type:variety pigeonholes. In their excellence of execution, these vessels more often exceed rather than embody the diagnostic attributes of established "ideal types," and they warrant recognition within separate and distinct categories, both on their own aesthetic merits and for other far more prosaic analytical reasons. It is not only inaccurate but highly misleading to make such identifications, and serves only to obscure possible zones of production, lines of interaction, and spheres of exchange. The result can only be obfuscation, or even distortion, of the cultural historical record and any interpretations or reconstructions made on its basis. I have dealt with such vessels by eschewing any typological designation or assignment and have described each instead as "too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization."

Just as certain vessels are too extraordinary to permit their valid inclusion within established types or groups, some pertain to recognizable groupings not yet formally described or designated in the scientific literature. I have assigned these to several provisional groups to indicate both their relationships to each other and their current lack of a formally established status. Hopefully this flexible approach to the several varied situations represented by these vessels will make their typological classification a useful tool for others rather than merely another idle exercise in scholarly pedantry.

Catalog Number	Maya Survey/Kerr Number	Type:variety designation
[illegible]	MS108[illegible]	Palmar ceramic group:orange-ground Codex-style
[illegible]	MS0059	too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization
[illegible]	MS034[illegible]	Zacatel ceramic group:cream-ground Codex-style
[illegible]	MS143[illegible]	Juleki Cream-polychrome:Juleki Variety
[illegible]	Bu. 116 dish	Chinos Black-on-cream:Chinos Variety
9	MS1374	Cabrito Cream-polychrome:Cabrito Variety
10	MS1375	Cabrito Cream-polychrome:Cabrito Variety
11	K2796	Cabrito Cream-polychrome ceramic group; too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization
12	MS0651	too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization
14	MS0448	too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization
16	MS1389	Zacatel Cream-polychrome:variety unspecified
18	MS0605	Zacatel Cream-polychrome:Cabrito Variety
19	MS0820	too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization
20	MS0647	Zacatel ceramic group:cream-ground Codex-style
21	MS0648	Zacatel ceramic group:cream-ground Codex-style
22	MS1137	Zacatel ceramic group:cream-ground Codex-style
23	MS0040	Saxche Orange-polychrome:Dzaptun Variety
24	MS0194	Juleki Cream-polychrome:Juleki Variety
25	MFA 1988.1172	Zacatel ceramic group:cream-ground Codex-style
26	MSBV10	Caledonia Maroon-on-cream:variety unspecified
27	MS0255	Acasaguastlán Polychrome:Acasaguastlán Variety (*provisional designation*)
28	MS1638	Caldero Buff-polychrome:Caldero Variety
29	MS1271	Zacatel Cream-polychrome:variety unspecified
30	MS1722	Zacatel ceramic group:cream-ground Codex-style
31	MS1262	Dos Arroyos ceramic group; undesignated red-polychrome type
32	MS1521	Cabrito Cream-polychrome:Cabrito Variety
33	MS1525	Zacatel Cream-polychrome:Panela Variety
34	MS0804	Chama Polychrome:cream-slipped variety (*provisional designation*)
35	MS0673	Zacatel Cream-polychrome:Zacatel Variety
36	MS0086	Zacatel Cream-polychrome:Zacatel Variety
37	MS1268	Paixban Buff-polychrome:variety unspecified
38	MS0165	Zacatel Cream-polychrome:Zacatel Variety
39	MS1370	Rojizo Red-brown-on-buff:Rojizo Variety
40	MS0445	too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization
41	MS1491	too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization
43	MS0159	Acasaguastlan Polychrome:Acasaguastlan Variety (*provisional designation*)
44	MSBV70	too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization
45	MS1138	Yaloche Cream-polychrome:Fulano Variety
48	MS1373	too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization
49	MS1419	too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization
50	MS0334	too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization
51	MS1127	Cabrito Cream-polychrome:Cabrito Variety
52	MS0038	Cabrito Cream-polychrome:Cabrito Variety
56	MS0253	Petkanche Orange-polychrome:Petkanche Variety
57	MS0091	Petkanche Orange-polychrome:Petkanche Variety
58	MS1438	Palmar Orange-polychrome:variety unspecified
59	MS0657	Palmar Orange-polychrome:variety unspecified
60	MS0250	Chama Polychrome:orange-slipped variety (*provisional designation*)
61	MS0245	Chamá Polychrome:orange-slipped variety (*provisional designation*)
63	MS1425	Cui Orange-polychrome:variety unspecified
64	K4321	Cui Orange-polychrome:variety unspecified
65	MS1516	*possibly* Calderitas Orange-polychrome:variety unspecified
66	MS0661	*possibly* Calderitas Orange-polychrome:variety unspecified
67	MS0053	Japon Resist:Japon Variety
68	MS0663	Palmar Orange-polychrome:variety unspecified
69	K4919	too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization
70	MS1426	too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization
71	MS0606	Cabrito Cream-polychrome:Cabrito Variety
72	MS0054	too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization
73	MS1118	too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization
79	MS1523	Saxche Orange-polychrome:Saxche Variety
80	MS1526	Juleki ceramic group:undesignated resist-ground type
82	MS0740	Palmar ceramic group (*possibly* Paixban Buff-polychrome:undesignated special variety)
83	MS0158	Zacatel Cream-polychrome:Panela Variety
84	MS0075	Saxche Orange-polychrome:Saxche Variety (although based on its painting style and chemical profile this vessel should be Palmar Orange-polychrome:Zacatel Variety because of its similarities to MS0225)
85	MS0160	Zacatel Cream-polychrome:Panela Variety
86	MS0739	too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization
88	MS1126	too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization
89	MS1404	Palmar ceramic group:orange-ground Codex-style
90	MS1392	Chama Polychrome:orange-slipped variety (*provisional designation*)
91	MS0249	too exceptional/uncommon for typological characterization
92	MS0240	Saxche Orange-polychrome:Saxche Variety
93	MS0060	Chantuori Black-on-orange:pre-slip incised variety
94	MS1684	Cabrito Cream-polychrome:Cabrito Variety
95	MS1416	Zacatel Cream-polychrome:variety unspecified

[illegible]	Type variety designation	Catalog Number	Maya Survey/Kerr Number	Type variety designation
[illegible]	[illegible] Variety	10	MS [illegible]	too exceptional uncommon for typological characterization
[illegible]	[illegible] Variety	73	MS1115	too exceptional uncommon for typological characterization
[illegible]	[illegible] Variety	88	MS1126	too exceptional uncommon for typological characterization
[illegible]	[illegible] uncommon for typological characterization	81	MS1127	Cabrito Cream polychrome Cabrito Variety
[illegible]	[illegible] uncommon for typological characterization	22	MS1132	Zacatel ceramic group cream ground Codex style
[illegible]	[illegible] orange pre-slip incised variety	18	MS1138	Yaloche Cream polychrome Lalano Variety
[illegible]	[illegible] Polychrome Saxche Variety (although based on [illegible] and chemical profile this vessel should be [illegible] polychrome Zacatel Variety because of its [illegible]	31	MS1252	Dos Arroyos ceramic group undesignated red polychrome type
		37	MS1268	Paxban Buff polychrome variety unspecified
		20	MS1271	Zacatel Cream polychrome variety unspecified
		39	MS1370	Rojizo Red brown on buff Rojizo Variety
[illegible]	[illegible] Cream polychrome Zacatel Variety	48	MS1373	too exceptional uncommon for typological characterization
[illegible]	[illegible] Cream polychrome:Panela Variety	9	MS1374	Cabrito Cream polychrome:Cabrito Variety
[illegible]	Acasaguastlan Polychrome:Acasaguastlan Variety (*provisional designation*)	10	MS1375	Cabrito Cream polychrome:Cabrito Variety
[illegible]	Zacatel Cream-polychrome:Panela Variety	16	MS1389	Zacatel Cream polychrome:variety unspecified
[illegible]	Zacatel Cream polychrome:Zacatel Variety	90	MS1392	Chama Polychrome:orange slipped variety (*provisional designation*)
[illegible]	Juleki Cream polychrome:Juleki Variety	89	MS1404	Palmar ceramic group:orange ground Codex style
[illegible]	Saxche Orange-polychrome:Saxche Variety	95	MS1416	Zacatel Cream polychrome:variety unspecified
[illegible]	Chama Polychrome:orange-slipped variety (*provisional designation*)	49	MS1419	too exceptional uncommon for typological characterization
[illegible]	too exceptional uncommon for typological characterization	63	MS1425	Cut Orange polychrome variety unspecified
[illegible]	Chama Polychrome:orange-slipped variety (*provisional designation*)	70	MS1426	too exceptional uncommon for typological characterization
[illegible]	Petkanche Orange-polychrome:Petkanche Variety	5	MS1432	Juleki Cream polychrome Juleki Variety
[illegible]	Acasaguastlan Polychrome:Acasaguastlan Variety (*provisional designation*)	58	MS1438	Palmar Orange polychrome variety unspecified
[illegible]	too exceptional uncommon for typological characterization	41	MS1491	too exceptional uncommon for typological characterization
[illegible]	Zacatel ceramic group:cream-ground Codex-style	65	MS1516	*possibly* Calderitas Orange polychrome variety unspecified
[illegible]	too exceptional uncommon for typological characterization	32	MS1521	Cabrito Cream polychrome:Cabrito Variety
[illegible]	too exceptional uncommon for typological characterization	79	MS1523	Saxche Orange-polychrome Saxche Variety
[illegible]	Zacatel Cream-polychrome:Cabrito Variety	33	MS1525	Zacatel Cream polychrome Panela Variety
[illegible]	Cabrito Cream polychrome:Cabrito Variety	80	MS1526	Juleki ceramic group undesignated reserve ground type
[illegible]	Zacatel ceramic group:cream-ground Codex-style	28	MS1638	Caldero Buff-polychrome Caldero Variety
[illegible]	Zacatel cream ground Codex style	94	MS1684	Cabrito Cream polychrome Cabrito Variety
[illegible]	too exceptional uncommon for typological characterization	1	MS1687	Palmar ceramic group orange ground Codex style
[illegible]	Palmar Orange polychrome:variety unspecified	26	MSBV10	Caledonia Maroon on cream variety unspecified
[illegible]	*possibly* Calderitas Orange-polychrome:variety unspecified	44	MSBV20	too exceptional uncommon for typological characterization
[illegible]	Palmar Orange polychrome:variety unspecified	57	MSC091	Petkanche Orange polychrome Petkanche Variety
[illegible]	Zacatel Cream polychrome:Zacatel Variety	7	Bu. 116 dish	Chinos Black on cream Chinos Variety
[illegible]	too exceptional uncommon for typological characterization	11	K2796	Cabrito Cream polychrome ceramic group too exceptional uncommon for typological characterization
[illegible]	Palmar ceramic group (*possibly* Paxban Buff-polychrome undesignated special variety)	64	K4321	Cut Orange polychrome variety unspecified
[illegible]	Chama Polychrome cream-slipped variety (*provisional designation*)	69	K4913	too exceptional uncommon for typological characterization
		30	MS1722	Zacatel ceramic group cream ground Codex style
		25	no MS/Kerr numbers	Zacatel ceramic group cream ground Codex style

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Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Courtiers of the Classic Period

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Front cover

Two royal artists sit inside a place, one carving a mask, the other with poised stylus ready to paint in a codex. *See catalog 2.*

Page 1

Codex-style plate with image of artist painting in a codex. *See catalog 1.*

Pages 30–31

Palace ritual scene with three seated lords. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collections, Washington, D.C. Trustees for Harvard University. *See catalog 14.*

Page 45

Figurine depicting a dwarf wearing an elaborate headdress. Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Gift of Constance McCormick Fearing. *See catalog 54.*

Page 1

Plate painted with the image of a water bird. Collection of Gillett G. Griffin. *See Figure 6.11.*

Pages 312–313

Detail from Codex-style vase painted in reverse. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Landon T. Clay. *See catalog 21.*

Lavishly illustrated with nearly 400 color images, *Painting the Maya Universe* is the most thorough study and brilliant display of Classic Maya ceramic painting yet published. Building on twenty years of research and debate, Dorie Reents-Budet and her collaborators Joseph W. Ball, Ronald L. Bishop, Virginia M. Fields, and Barbara MacLeod bring together many perspectives, including the art historical, archaeological, epigraphical, and ethnohistorical, to examine one of the world's great but overlooked painting traditions. With an emphasis on sixth- to eighth-century pottery featuring both pictorial and hieroglyphic imagery, *Painting the Maya Universe* presents an extraordinary exploration of the cultural roles and meanings of these Guatemalan, Belizean, and Mexican elite painted ceramics. Maya pottery is discussed both in aesthetic terms and for the important information it reveals about Maya society, artistry, politics, history, religion, and ritual. The range of ceramic painting styles developed during this period is also presented and defined in detail.

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—from the foreword by Linda Schele, author of *Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual in Maya Art*

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